

# CHRISTIAN ORIENT

A JOURNAL OF EASTERN CHURCHES FOR CREATIVE THEOLOGICAL THINKING

DECEMBER 2000

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## ECUMENISM

EDITORIAL

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE MYSTERY OF INCARNATION

Geevarghese Chediath

CHRISTIANITY AND NATIONAL CHURCHES

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THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF *COMMUNICATIO IN SACRIS*

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# EDITORIAL

The Year 2000 was a special occasion of Grace. We passed through a period of thanksgiving to the Father on account of sending His Only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ into the world as our Savior and Redeemer. The Jubilee year was a period of humble acceptance of our weakness and sins and of asking pardon to God and to the brethren, for not fully choosing light and life and truth, for not properly presenting the shining face of Christ down through the centuries. The Church made use of the opportunity to ask pardon to all concerned for the past mistakes. It indicates the willingness of the Church not to repeat the past mistakes any more in its old form or in a new form. The Jubilee year was also an occasion for intense ecumenical encounters of those who bear the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God was working in the division. The Church in recent years gave priority to dialogue, specially with the world religions and considered it as an effective means to present the Savior of the World. Thus we find in these years several inter-religious dialogues taking place, especially in those countries where there is a multi-religious context. It was an occasion for proclaiming the truth of Incarnation before the world in spite of the setbacks in certain parts of the world. One can witness in recent years waves of violence in various forms in several places in India. There is a well-calculated move from the part of some fundamentalists to inject poison and hatred into the veins of the peace - loving and God- fearing masses in the Indian Subcontinent. They circulate anti-Christian literature in the various languages and instigate the large population. They attack Christian missionaries and Christian institutions. The basic reason is their love for darkness instead of light and their intention to keep the Dalits and people of the lower strata in their subhuman condition and darkness and untruth. They are afraid of the vast majority of the downtrodden, the untouchables, the Girijans, the poor and the oppressed. The Christian love extended to these children of God uplifts them. The upper caste Hindu leaders would not tolerate it because of economic and political motives. During this Holy Year itself, several Christian worshipping centres were attacked in several parts of India. But Christianity is the Religion of Hope, 'Hope of the whole world', because Christ is the Savior of the World, and our Great God, and the Son of the Father. No persecution can hinder us from proclaiming this Good News. Millions of Christians down through the generations have shed their blood for this cause and we are sure, in the long run, Truth will prevail. In Him we have confidence, for He had conquered the world. The world, which rejected Him, will continue to oppose the Light and Truth, but in spite of the opposition He will establish the Kingdom of God. We join all our readers in this Jubilee Year to thank God and wish all a happy Christmas and a blessed New Year in our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Geevarghese Chediath**



## DOCUMENTATION

The document which was given from Rome to the Major Archbishop on 17th December 1999 was communicated to the other bishops of the Church during the Synodal session held from 10 to 22 July 2000.

### CONGREGATIO PRO ECCLESIIS ORIENTALIBUS

Prot. N. 1796/99

Eccellenza Reverendissima,

E' pervenuto a questa Congregazione, con lettera del 21 novembre 1999, il testo relativo alle modalita di celebrazione del Holy Qurbana, approvato unanimemente dal Sinodo Siro Malabarese durante la sessione dei giorni 15-20 novembre scorsi.

La considerazione del testo, nonche la forma della sua approvazione e l'impegno del Sinodo per la sua pronta e accurata diffusione offrono possibilita a questa Congregazione di rallegrarsi vivamente per il raggiungimento di questo importante risultato.

Questo Dicastero non ha obiezioni nei confronti della decisione assunta, che considera un nuovo, importante passo nella coscienza dell'identita della Chiesa siro-malabarese e un fondamentale contributo alla comunione ecclesiale, mediante una prassi pastorale omogenea. In allegato si uniscono alcune avvertenze concrete per la corretta applicazione del provvedimento.

Perche la decisione possa sortire l'effetto desiderato e indispensabile che, nella promulgazione e nell'applicazione, l'intero Sinodo dei Vescovi, sia collegialmente sia in ciascuno dei membri, si assuma la piena responsabilita pastorale di una fedele e corretta attuazione.

Con sentimenti di distinto ossequio mi confermo

Suo dev.mo

Achille Card. Silvestrini

Prefect

A Sua Eccellenza Reverendissima

Mons. VARKEY VITHAYATHIL, C.Ss.R.

Amministratore Apotolico di Ernakulam - Angamaly

### ENCLOSURE

1. The rubrics to be promulgated for the implementation of this synodal decision should be unmistakably explicit. They should state clearly, as in the above mentioned document that during the Anaphora the priest faces East (or the altar, i.e., with his back to the congregation, leading the people in prayer while facing in the same direction the people themselves are facing); and that the priest begins to face in this direction (toward the altar and away from the congregation) beginning with and including the Prayer of accessus ad altare: "I give you thanks, my Father, Lord of heaven and earth..." The priest remains facing in this direction during the entire Anaphora, except of course at those points where the traditional rubrics order him to turn to the congregation for a greeting.

2. It should be noted that in churches which have restored the once- traditional Bema in the centre of the nave, in the midst of the congregation- and such a restoration would certainly be desirable at least as an experimentum for example, in liturgical centres and Seminary or Monastic Chapels - then during the Liturgy of the Word the Clergy on the Bema would be seated in the midst of the people and facing in the same direction as they, in the direction of the lecterns for the readings of the Liturgy of the Word.

3. Furthermore, in churches so designed, it would not be necessary for the presiding priest to come to the Bema for the concluding rites of the liturgy, which would be celebrated from the front of the questroma or sanctuary platform, facing the people.



# SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE MYSTERY OF INCARNATION

Geevarghese Chediath

## Introduction

There is only one divine plan of God for all mankind. In the beginning God created man in His own image and likeness. And the whole human race is from the first parents. After the fall of the first parents, God recreated and renewed the humanity through the same Word through Whom He created. History of mankind is the history of God's saving activity which reached its culmination in the Incarnation of the Word, "Word becoming flesh." God was preparing all peoples and nations to the manifestation of His Son and He did not exclude any people.

## Selection of the Hebrews

But historically God chose a particular race, the Hebrews, and they were guided in a very special way as a pedagogic step. He spoke to them through the prophets and prepared them for the coming of His Son, Christ. The Old Testament, the Sacred Scriptures of the Hebrews, is the history of this preparation. At the appointed time God spoke to the Hebrews and to all through His own Son. Christ encountered His own people in the temple, in the street, at home and in the gardens, privately and publicly. He taught them the Truths about God, about the destiny of mankind and revealed to them the divine mysteries. During the Old Testament period, the Hebrews were trained by divine providence to accept the one living God. In the midst of the multitudes of gods and

goddesses of the people around, the Hebrews in general kept the faith in the One True God, the Creator of heaven and earth. To them Christ introduced the faith in the Triune God: that the one divine Godhead exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit eternally and indivisibly. It was a new revelation for them. Christ went beyond the legalism of the then Jewish leaders and pointed to the spirit of the law. Very few accepted him and recognized him and acknowledged him. The vast majority of the population rejected him.

## Who is Christ?

Christ is the Enlightened One, Compassionate Friend of the poor, the Good Shepherd, the Good Samaritan, the Healer of sickness, the Liberator, the Spiritual Guide, the Wonder Worker, the Teacher of Wisdom. He gave a different interpretation than the one, the then Jewish leaders gave to the law. He appeared to be a rebel to many of the leaders of the community, a breaker of the law. But he assured that he came not to abolish the law but to fulfil. He was a teacher of God's universal fatherhood and human fraternity. He was different from their Hebrew leaders and teachers. He was different in his love, and in his doctrine about love. It was strange to their mentality, although their own prophets taught it. He was a perfect Guru, Rabbi, Master. He affirmed that he came to show the Way to the Father, that he is the Door to the Father, that



he gives True Life and can illumine those who are in darkness. Through his words and the signs he did, he proved that he is the Son of God and son of man, and more than their prophets. The Hebrews were expecting a Saviour. And he proved to them that he is the true liberator. But they could not comprehend him and he was different from their view of a Saviour. But the leaders of the Hebrew and Roman community of that time at Palestine decided to crucify Christ. But in the decision of God it was the plan for the Salvation of mankind. God achieved the salvation of mankind through the incarnation, life and teaching above all by the suffering and death on the cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was love incarnate, He was unconditional love, and He was the incarnation of God's love. He was God's love for mankind in human form. He preached only one Gospel, the Gospel of love: that God is to be loved above everything and that human beings should love one another. He preached the Gospel of non - violence, the Gospel of loving even one's enemies, and praying for those who persecute and calumniate and insult. He preached the Gospel of blessing instead of curse. He was absolute goodness. He was the greatest of the prophets and the fulfilment of the prophets. He was innocent and he was the embodiment of Truth and Goodness. There was no lie or wickedness in his mouth. He did only what is good.

His death seemed to be the end of everything. Even His close followers were disheartened and confused at the tragic death of their innocent Master. But his death was not the end of His existence. The moment of His death was the moment of his supreme act of redemption. He rose from death on the third day and in His glory He received a transformed human life and He appeared to His close disciples and showed that He is risen

and that He lives. He proved to be above death, change, mutability and pain. He transcended time and space and showed that He is truly God's Only Son, accepted by God and that He is enjoying the glory of the Father as ever before. After confirming His disciples in the faith in His resurrection, he ascended into heaven. But He promised them His continued assistance and presence. They felt His presence through His Spirit, which was poured out to them on the day of Pentecost.

### The First Disciples

The first disciples remembered all what Jesus taught and told. They were convinced of His truth and love. They were filled with His Gospel of love. For them Christ was unique. He was unlike the other prophets, He was unlike the other Gurus and teachers and Rabbis, He was unlike the other Saviours. He was a man, but they realized His true identity as the unique and unparalleled Mediator. Their conviction was so powerful that they laid down their life for this man who died for them. Nothing could hinder them from preaching this Gospel; nothing could prevent them from preaching this God-man.

Their faith was basically a faith in the Holy Trinity. They were strict Jewish monotheists but they firmly believed in the Father and believed in the Son of the Father, and in the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, and who was poured out on them on the day of Pentecost. They experienced the presence of the Trinitarian God in themselves. In His name they showed signs and wonders and proved the veracity of their words. By faith they accepted the strict monotheism of the Hebrews and the new revelation of the Trinity. They continued to believe in the one God, but they accepted a new dimension to it, namely the plurality of the Persons in the one Divinity. At the same time they avoided the polytheism



of the people around them.

They accepted the revelation of God. God spoke to them and they responded in accepting it. Their words were words of power. That is why on the day of pentecost at the words of the ignorant fisherman Peter, 3000 Hebrews believed in Jesus as Christ and the promised Messiah. They communicated this message, and spoke about God's gratuitous gift for mankind. They explained to them God's Wonderful designs that God has chosen our world. He created it and He redeemed it in His own way at the fullness of time. This is the good news of salvation. God united us to Himself. He made us partakers of His divinity. He united everything in Christ (Eph 1,10) He united heaven and earth. He created a new humanity by Him and Christ is made the Head of this new humanity. This humanity is the body of the Risen Lord. God made us worthy of sharing this gift. We all, men and women of all races and nations are called to be sharers of this gift. All are called to be the redeemed children of God; all are called to be the members of the body of Christ, the renewed mankind in Christ. God wants that His offer of salvation should reach all men, reach to the end of the world.

### **Objective Redemption**

We do not divinise Christ, but he is divine by His nature and He came to make us divine. We are not predicating attributes to Him. But ontologically He is the Saviour of mankind. The veracity of this revelation does not depend on my acceptance. This is independent of my acknowledgment. It is God's action in Him that made Him the Savior of mankind. Christ is my Redeemer in God's design. He is my Lord. I accept it with gratitude. I do not make Him my Redeemer. He is God and Redeemer by His own nature. By His grace, I realized and I am given the grace to believe it. And

this faith in Him is my salvation for me. The fundamental reality of Christianity is that God has spoken through His Son to the humanity. The Son of God appeared in a particular land, in a particular cultural milieu, among a particular people. He put on the garment of a Hebrew. This was part of the economy of salvation designed by God and realized in the redemptive act of Jesus Christ.

### **Christianity versus**

#### **Greco - Roman World**

The first disciples had the problem of convincing the Hebrews of Palestine and of the Diaspora that Jesus is the Christ, expected by the Jews. They tried to prove it from the Old Testament texts and in fact many among the Hebrews believed in Jesus as their Messiah. It was the first encounter of Christ's saving message with the Jews. The second stage was its encounter with the Greco - Roman world. The Greeks had their Philosophy and the Romans their Law. As Christianity spread among the non-Jewish population of the Greco- Roman world, it took a slightly different form. But basically it was built up on the Jewish Old Testament foundation. The Greek Philosophy was a preparation and means for converging the message of Christ. The Philosophy of Aristotle in a very special manner paved the way. Although the Greeks and the Romans in general believed in polytheism, people like Aristotle believed in the one God, Creator of heaven and earth, and the Prime Mover of all that moves. At Athens Paul could tell the Athenians that we proclaim "the unknown god whom you worship". Then he continued and made use of the occasion to speak about Christ (Acts 17, 22-31). It was difficult for the Greeks and Romans to do away with their polytheism and idol worship. It was intermingled with their day to day life. But the Apostles did not dilute



the Gospel. They were ready to die for the truth rather than deny the truth. But slowly as a leaven in the dough, the Good News spread among all the sections of the Greco - Roman society. Christianity was slowly transforming the society. Many Greeks, especially the writers, instigated the mobs against those who accepted the good message. They spread calumnies, false accusations against Christians such as atheism, immoral life and exclusiveness. Christianity was depicted as a threat to the Roman State. So some of the cruel tyrants persecuted Christianity and it lasted for 300 years until Constantine came. First he tolerated Christianity and in 313 abolished the anti - Christian laws. Later he preferred Christianity to other religions and at his death-bed he became a Christian. With that change and by that time most of the Greco-Roman population became Christian.

### **Christianity and the Waves of Migrants**

The region around the Mediterranean Sea became the center of Christianity. Christian faith preserved the cultures of the peoples and fostered all that was good in them and transmitted to the posterity. Although the Roman Empire came to an end in 476, the ancient cultures did not die out and vanish. The ancient Greco-Roman culture and civilization became a vehicle for christianity.

During the next stage of development and growth of Christianity in the West, Europe saw waves of barbarian migration from the East. Christianity transformed these people and made them cultured and they became the inheritors of the ancient culture through the medium of Christianity. Charlemagne, the leader of one of the migrant groups, the Franks, became the champion of the Good News and protector of Christianity and culture.

The center of Christianity was no more around the Mediterranean world, but the region known today as Western Europe. It was a new encounter of the salvific message with a new population. This process continued all through the Middle Ages. Christianity took a definite Western shape during this period. The Byzantine Church also witnessed to the Good News in Central and East Europe and Russia. It succeeded in integrating and uniting the Central Asian waves of migrants until it was completely subdued by the Ottoman Turks in 1453. But by that time, the centre of Eastern Christianity was transferred to Moscow. Eastern Christianity flourished among the Slavs. And there emerged a new form of Slavic Christianity, contributing to the richness and diversity of Christianity.

### **Syrian and Egyptian Christianity**

But this symbiosis of Christianity with the neighbouring cultures and migrant population did not take place in greater extent and in an effective manner in the Syrian and Egyptian ambience. The Eastern Christianity was divided over terms and expressions. As a result they lost sight of the essence of Christianity and the essential mission of Christianity in the world. The essence of Christianity is love and its mission is the unity of mankind in the new Man. They on the contrary, presented the picture of a divided Christianity: instead of love, hatred, instead of the Good News, the bad news of division and discord. Hence they could, not at all influence the vast majority of the Arab and African population. They were in the quarrelling epoch and not at all missionary oriented. Except a very few Arabs living adjacent to the Byzantine-Persian border becoming Christian, Christianity was not presented properly to the Arabs. Even after 600 years of the appearance of the Messiah, his message was not transmitted and translated



into Arabic. It was the divided Syriac Christianity that was presented to them and it was not appealing to the Arabs. Or it was not at all presented to them in the proper effective way. The Arabs, until Muhammad, continued to be idol worshippers and polytheists. The form of Christianity presented in Arabia at that time was docetic and heterodox. That form could not influence and integrate the Arabs. The same was true of the African Christianity. Africa remained an unknown and unexplored continent down through the centuries. The Copts were busy with the discussions over theological vocabulary and terms that divided Christianity from Christians. These Christians could not effectively influence and integrate the successive Turkish and Mongol invaders. They were eventually attracted to Islam. So the waves of migrants from Central Asia could not be integrated into the one fold of Christianity. The root cause was the division and lack of vitality of Christianity for proclaiming the Good News of Salvation. Even the Crusaders who came to West Asia from Europe could not present the Savior of mankind authentically and attractively.

Moreover for reasons unknown to us, no Constantine and no Charlemagne arose in the East to stand for the cause of Christianity. All through the history, Christianity remained a minority religion and a persecuted religion in one way or other in its homeland, the vast Asiatic continent. The only exception was those parts of Asia, which were under the Byzantine rule. Syriac form of Christianity, which was in the East, should have taken the Arab, Turkish, Mongol and Chinese forms. Instead, it remained with the Syriac form and after the Arab invasion in a way had a fossilized and marginalised existence. It was no more effective and influential in witnessing and evangelizing. It became powerless and

incapable of carrying the Good News and encountering the diverse cultures of the Asiatic continent.

### **Division in the Western Church (16th cent.) and World wide Missionary Activity**

The 16th century Reformation in the West divided the Western Church into innumerable confessional groups. Instead of uniting humankind, it divided the one Western Church and population. The after effect was disastrous for Europe, for the Western Church and the cause of Christianity, and for humankind at large. The colonialism, which followed the confessional conflicts, exported the conflicts to the Americas, Australia, Asia and Africa. The so-called Latin countries succeeded in witnessing Christ in South America.

It was a new encounter and experience for Christianity. It had to encounter the American, African and Asiatic cultures. The form of Christianity, which the Europeans presented was Western and divisive. All the same Western Christianity gave a chance to the Asian, African and American population to know about the Good News of Salvation. We find that Christianity took a new form and shape with the Reformation and Colonialism. Until the second part of the 20th century, we find in these regions conflicting claims for Christ and the Christian message. Communism in a later period tried to uproot Christianity in a vast region in Asia. But atheistic communism proved to be a failure and contrary to human nature and development.

### **Era of Ecumenism**

During the second half of the 20th century the Christian Churches realised that their division is a great hindrance to the authentic and fruitful proclamation of the Good News, especially in Asia. The ancient cultures of India, China and South East Asia still remain without



the full encounter with the Good News of Salvation. There was no earnest, real and serious encounter of Christianity with the religions of Asia. Christians are now trying to be freed from their sectarianism and conflicting claims and mutual accusations. The second half of the 20th cent. witnessed the mutual recognition of the Christian Churches to a great extent and their earnest desire to rectify the mistakes of the past. But the imbalance existing among the churches is a great hindrance for their total mutual recognition.

### India: Our home

India is our home country. We are proud of our Indian reality. In India Christianity reached through one of the twelve Apostles of the Lord. The form of Christianity which reached here and developed later until the 16th cent. was the Syriac Christianity, an Asiatic Christianity. It survived the upheavals of time and continues to exist even to our day. Although the 16th cent. colonialism had its effects in the life of this church, it continues in various confessional forms, predominantly in South India. The British East India Company, unlike the Spaniards and the Portuguese, were disinterested in religious matters. As the agent of colonial power, the Company did not give priority to the proclamation of the Good News and sharing with others. But some missionaries of European origins belonging to various confessional groups tried to proclaim Christ and His message in a limited way. Except in Kerala, the form of Christianity which was presented and known to the people in India was Western and was connected with colonialism. There were attempts from the part of some missionaries and some well-intentioned and enlightened Indian leaders to present Christ and Christianity devoid of the Western garb of Western Christianity. But there was no serious attempt until the second half

of the 20th cent. to have a real encounter of Christianity with the Indian culture and heritage. Christianity in its Eastern or Western form did not incarnate in India and develop into an Indian Christianity, just as the Slavic or Western Christianity. It remained Syrian or Latin, although Syriac Christianity was Asian and more akin to the mind of India, and became part of the Indian heritage and culture.

### Our Priority

In India our absolute priority is the joyful, patient and progressive preaching of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is in full accordance with the saving mandate of Christ: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt 28, 18-20). We have absolutely no other intention; we have no hidden agenda, no political motif and no secular ambition. Salvation is offered to us in Jesus Christ. We have believed and we have come to know that Jesus Christ is the Holy One of God (Jn 6, 69). We have accepted that Jesus Christ is the Savior of mankind. He has brought about our salvation through His death and resurrection, and He came to give us the True Life: "that all may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10, 10). His is the unparalleled Mediation between God and mankind. He is the Supreme Redeemer and Liberator of the world. He has to be distinguished from others, as He revealed the Supreme plan of God and this is the unique plan, which we know. And it is for all men of all times and places till the end of the world. We want to share it with others. We have seen and experienced it and what we have seen and experienced, we cannot but share with others. This is the Supreme command from Jesus Christ, so that others also may have life from Him and inheritance with Him.



## Life of Love and Service

We want to do this through our life of love, in serving the poor in imitation of our Master who came to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the sick, to feed the hungry and to console the afflicted and the down-trodden. Whatever we do by way of social work or educational or other Charitable Activities we have only this sole intention of imparting the message of Love and the Gospel of Love in imitation of our Master who gives us the courage to do it.

## Our Fore-fathers were Expecting Him

We believe that God shows no partiality and in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him (Acts.10:34). God was pouring out Seeds of His Wisdom among all peoples of the World. He spoke to our fore-fathers through the Maharshis and Sages. They saw His glory and expected his coming in saying:

“Asato ma sat gamaya  
Tamaso ma jyothir gamaya  
Mrtyo ma amrtham gamaya”

He guides us until our final encounter with Him becomes perfect and full. He also influenced our leaders and Maharshis. His Spirit was guiding them. In India our Rshis saw Him as one and three: *Satchitananda*. They saw Him as *Brahman*, *Vishnu* and *Maheswara*. In no other religion other than Christianity, do we find such a lofty concept about the Triune God: one Unique Godhead as Triad. God is the Supreme Being. He is one in Essence and Existence. But in the one Godhead there is a plurality of Persons. God is one, but God is not one Person. *God is Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara*. God is Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. He is Sat, Cit, Ananda. This is not clear in Judaism. Nor is it affirmed in Islam. But it is known in Hinduism. In this aspect of the

concept of the Absolute, Hinduism is closer to Christianity than Islam or Judaism. God is our Creator, God is our Father. God is our Savior, and God is our Purifying Spirit, the Spirit of Holiness. To say that there is Plurality of persons in the Absolute Oneness of the Supreme Godhead is not polytheism. In strict Hinduism there is no place for polytheism. Our Rshis made it very clear and this is the teaching of Christianity also. In the same way the doctrine of Incarnation is clearer in Hinduism than in Judaism. Islam has no idea of the doctrine of Incarnation of the divinity. Hinduism believes in *Avatar*, that God is descending to save mankind from evil: “*Jata jata hi dharmasya glanirbhavati Bharata.*” It is *Mahavishnu* who is descending to save mankind. And *Sri Ayyappan* is *Harithar-asuthan*: the Incarnation of Hari (Vishnu) through the activity of *Parameswara*.

## Seeds of Revelation in Hinduism

In ordinary Hinduism one has to distinguish a lot of symbols and symbolic worship. Hindus in general are not idol worshippers. One finds a lot of symbols in all religions. One section of Hinduism turns to *Jnana marga*, another to *Bhakti marga* and a third group turns to *Karma marga*. We know that all the three ways are valid and one sees in all the religions these three ways to attain God. Some Hindus turn more attention to Brahman, others to Vishnu and others to Paramasiva. All the same time one finds fanaticism, excesses, and radicalism in all religions. But it is not the true face of religions, but vested interest in the form of religion. The essence of all true religions is love. The spirit of India is monotheistic and unlike Islam and Judaism “pluralistic” in the sense of accepting a plurality of Persons in the divinity. It is very close to the Christian monotheism and “divine pluralism”.



As Christians we believe that Seeds of the Divine Revelation bore abundant fruit in Hinduism. Its fullness and completion is through the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that Christianity fulfils the natural aspirations of mankind. Mankind is basically seeking God, and on the other side, God is seeking mankind and gradually revealing Himself to mankind according to their capacity. For various peoples it varies. There is a preparation for His reception. It is not given to all at once. Although it is already revealed in its fullness through the Incarnation of Christ, its communication to the various peoples is gradual. It is given to each group after sufficient preparation.

### Conversion is the Work of the Spirit

We firmly believe that we do not convert anyone. None of us can convert anybody. It is beyond our power. We preach the Good News and share our encounter with Christ. We believe that it is the Father who is drawing to Himself those who believe in Jesus Christ: "I, when I am lifted up from the earth will draw all men to myself." (Jn 12,32). "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (6,44). "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and him who comes to me I will not cast out" (6,37). "No one can receive anything, except what is given him from heaven." (3,27). "Apart from me you can do nothing" (15,5). "It is God who is shining in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Christ." (2Cor.9,6). "No one can say, Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12,3). Hence conversion is absolutely God's work. We, however, preach the Risen Lord. When the Father draws someone, he changes his way of life and his attitude to life. He receives a new orientation in life and a new existence in Jesus Christ. He becomes the body of Christ

and is united to Him. It produces conversion in him. He becomes a new creation by the action of God's Spirit in him. Authentic faith in Jesus Christ produces conversion of heart and mind for a better human life for the service of the society and nation.

### Symbiosis of Hinduism and Christianity

We, as human beings created by God in His Image, by nature seek God. The expression of our seeking appears as Puranas and Itihasas, cult and customs, religious performances and rituals. At the same time, at the other end, God is seeking us, as individuals and as groups. Christianity believes that at a particular moment in history, there was effected an encounter of these two searching: the seeking of God by man and the descending of God to man. It happened in Jesus Christ 2000 years ago in Palestine among the Hebrew population. This is the real, true and full encounter of God and mankind in history.

Christianity embraces all that is good and noble in the religions and cultures of the people. There is nothing good which is alien to Christianity. Christ came to fulfill. Just as Christianity embraced the heritage of the Hebrews, the Greeks, the Romans and the Barbarians from Central Asia who migrated to Western Europe, it can and should embrace Hinduism. Christianity has a lot to learn and accept from Hinduism. Hinduism has a lot to contribute to the development of Christianity. Unfortunately it has not yet been done in depth. All that is good and noble in Hinduism is the property of mankind and so of Christianity also. In the same way all that is good in Christianity should also become the property of all and of India. An authentic seeker of truth need not exclude either Christianity or Hinduism. We are proud of our Hindu



heritage. By nature Hinduism is all embracing. It embraced every culture, which came to India. So Christianity has a vital place in the heart of Hinduism for a better society, for the building up of a better India and for the service of the multitude in India. Through the symbiosis of Christianity and Hinduism through dialogue and interaction a new type of Christianity should emerge. It requires a lot of kenosis from the part of Christians and Hindus. It will be a new type of Indian Christianity. It may have different forms of expressions and different theology and ways of worship and thought patterns, but at the same time true to the Indian culture and the original Gospel tradition of the Apostles and the Fathers. It could have been different type of Christianity than the type of Christianity one meets today both in the East and in the West. It need not have been the duplicate of the Syrian, European, Egyptian, Byzantine or Roman form, although some of these forms have been part of our national heritage and culture.

## Dialogue

For the symbiosis of Christianity and Hinduism the effective method is the method of dialogue. Dialogue is an imperative today more than before. Today with the development of communication media, the world has become very small, ideas are spreading very rapidly and interaction is very easy. What happened in 1000 years may happen in few years. And in general today's man is more open to Truth. Truth belongs to the mind and akin to our nature, while falsehood is contrary to human nature. That is why Christ said: "I am the Truth." He is closer to our mind and nature. We, the Christians therefore, give importance to dialogue as a characteristic mode of our Christian life. We are sorry that this did not take place in the past as we would have liked it. Many Christians

in the past believed that Christianity has something to offer to Hinduism, while they ignored the fact that Hinduism has a lot to offer to Christianity. Hence there was no effective dialogue. Hinduism was held by some in opposition to Christianity and Christianity in opposition to Hinduism. Or there was no earnest attempt to have a dialogue with the authentic Hinduism. Christ who came to bear witness to Truth and who is Truth Himself, is not the exclusive property of the Christians. He belongs to all. He has a message to all. But this message presents itself to all the cultures in diverse ways. Every culture is a *locus theologicus* for the Gospel. Just as we, all the people of India, belong to India and India belongs to all of us, Christ belongs to India, and India belongs to Christ. He is not the exclusive property of the churches. We seek to engage in sincere dialogue with the followers of other religious traditions and cultures. We believe that these religious values await their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. We believe that our identity as Indians is best discovered and affirmed in the spirit of complementarity and harmony, and not in confrontation and opposition. Dialogue is not a hidden means to entice people. It is inspired by the all embracing desire to discover the presence and working of the Spirit of God in others, in individuals and in the religions. Collaboration is to build up a better society, a reconciled society. By listening and speaking, all will be able to realize the presence and working of the Spirit in others. The presence and operation of the Spirit of God is not limited to the visible structures of the Church or churches as some may think. Just as the Spirit was speaking in ancient times, the Spirit continues to speak and prepare the generations for the restoration of mankind in the New Adam, the Redeemed Man, so that all mankind may one day become one People, may become the body of the



New Man. We are ready to discuss any issue with our friends in the other religions individually and in groups. We are open to accept the Truth and we want to learn from all, from all religions. Dialogue will enable us to remove the misunderstandings on all sides. There are still persistent misunderstandings and prejudices among religions. There is also gradation in the appreciation of one another. From the part of the Catholic Church, we are irrevocably committed to dialogue and we always stand for dialogue and understanding among us and peaceful coexistence. We never want to impose our ideas on anyone. We do not want to force anybody to the faith in the Lord. But we want to present the Savior of the world and this we want to present in a way others can understand Him. And we want to understand others also. That is why we are very earnest and eager to have dialogue with all.

### Persecution and Calumny

Jesus had to meet the opposition of the forces of evil. He was Himself Goodness and He did only what is good. He told in anticipation that the forces of evil will persecute Him and his followers: "The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. The world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people received Him not." (Jn.1,9-10). "This is the judgement that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (3,9). "In the world you have tribulations, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world" (16,33). "Behold I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and flog you in their synagogues; for you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the gentiles. You

will be hated by all for my name's sake. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next (Mt.10,16-23). The forces of evil continued to persecute the followers of Christ. It continued for 300 years in the ancient Roman Empire and finally goodness prevailed over evil. Persecution is not the last thing. It gives new strength and courage to go forward. Definitely, it is evil that is behind the present day anti Christian vile propaganda and the killing of those who do only what is good, especially to the poor and the down-trodden.

Authentic Hinduism cannot be cruel; it cannot hate any one. The heart of India is peace-loving and it believes in *Ahimsa* or non-violence. The vast majority of the common Indian population is peace-loving. We were living here for over 2000 years in peace and harmony, tranquility and brotherly love. We, all the citizens of India shared together our sorrows and joys. We worked together for the building up of our dear country. But in very recent years a lot of inhuman and anti Christian propaganda is being made from certain quarters, spreading false accusations and calumny through publication among the common Hindus. This type of literature is full of poison, instigating hatred in the mind of Hindus against Christians. When we find justification for the crimes from certain quarters, we are forced to make our own conclusions regarding the origin of such literature. It is being spread through out India in all Indian languages. There is fear and a sense of insecurity in the minds of many Christians. In recent years, especially during the last year and this year one finds almost every day crimes and atrocities committed against priests, sisters and Christian worshipping centers. We on our part want an atmosphere of mutual understanding, trust and security. We believe in the spirit of cooperation and dialogue and



peaceful coexistence. We do not believe in confrontation and hatred. In all our activities, we want to communicate the love of God, manifested in Jesus Christ. We want to have loving and selfless care for the poorest of the poor, we want to be the icon of the service to life and we want to impart a human formation especially to the weaker section of the society.

We are forced to think that there is very tiny minority having vested political or economic interest. They want to keep the oppressed and under privileged as always oppressed and poor. They want to keep them uneducated and underdeveloped as beings without human rights. When these poorest, the *adivasis* and the untouchables begin to be human beings through education and development, these oppressors consider our presence as a threat to their political and economic existence. These overlords really want that the Christians conduct schools, for the education of their children, but not for the education of the poor. These overlords make use of every facility offered by the Christians for their children and for themselves, but they do not want that this should reach the poor class. They want to keep the poor always as poor. And dragging religions is just a cover for the political and economic vested interests. The accusations levelled against the Christians are more calumnies. If the Christians desist from doing good to the poor, automatically the attack will be stopped. It is a false fear that prompts these people to instigate the mass for religious fanaticism and in human atrocities.

### Liberty of Conscience

We respect the liberty of conscience of the individuals. But every human being has a right to hear the Good News of God who reveals and gives Himself in Christ. Nobody can deny

it to any person, especially in the democratic secular set up of our noble country. Our fathers has adopted this democratic constitution and we are free to speak out the truth, which we consider as important for India and for humanity. We do not force anyone. In God's gracious kindness, if a person or group of persons accept the call of God we accept that person or group to Christianity. His call of God may demand him to change his attitude to life and world, and follow the path of the Gospel of love. He may be converted to God to be a better human being. Any man in India is free to change his political allegiance at his own will. But it is illogical to say that he cannot opt for a religion that his conscience dictates him to be better for him. To say that a change in the political sphere is possible, but a change in the religious sphere is impossible is illogical. It is not worthy of today's democratic man to think like that.

### Conclusion

We do not induce any one. We do not tempt any one. We do not discriminate human beings from human beings. Our service is offered to all, even to those who hate us and persecute us. We know only one Gospel: the Gospel of love-love of God and love of our fellow men. We have only one aim: building up a better world and especially better India for all the citizens, including the under privileged and untouchables, in India. And nothing can prevent us from this service which we offer to humanity. And he who is hung on the cross is the one who gives us the strength in our pilgrimage and we ask our brethren of other faiths to reciprocate our good will with the real love for humanity, which is integral to our culture.





# CHRISTIANITY AND NATIONAL CHURCHES

Xavier Koodappuzha

## 1. Introduction

Serious discussions are going on at various levels on the recent statements of some BJP leaders and others on the “*National Churches*”. The recent article of Sri Gurumurthy (Indian Express 28.10. 2000) and statements of Sri Sudarshan, Arun Shourie and others cannot be left unnoticed. Their views unveil a dangerous attitude towards Christianity and subsequently to other religious traditions in India. It is a threat to Indian secularism, unity of the country, religious heritage of Asia, and national integration.

## Christianity in India

The 20<sup>th</sup> century is a period of independence movement, revival, national awakening, restoration and reform. The Afro-Asian countries have become free and there has been an increasing awareness of the cultural, religious, social and political identity of these nations. Historically speaking, Church in India is as old as Christianity itself. It is St Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, who came to India, and founded the Church by sharing the good news of Christ. It is more ancient in India than in most of the European countries. In this context an adequate understanding of the religious heritage of India is necessary.

The following statement of **Dr. Rajendra Prasad**, the first President of the Indian Republic, is also relevant in this context. “Remember, St. Thomas came to India, when many of the countries of Europe had not yet become Christian, and those Indians who trace their Christianity to him have a longer history and a higher ancestry than that of the Christians of many of the European countries. And it is really a matter of pride to us that it so happened”.<sup>1</sup> Late **President Sankar Dayal Sharma** on the solemn occasion of his solemn installation as the President of India specifically referred to the origin of Christianity in India from St Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. He mentioned it to point out to the whole world the richness, antiquity and indigenous identity of the great religions including Christianity in the Indian soil. The words of the late President **Giani Zail Singh** on the occasion of the solemn inauguration of the Paurastya Vidyapitham at Vadavathoor Kottayam on 26. 10. 1983 still linger long in my memory. In his inaugural address, the President appropriating the very same words of Fr. Placid J. Podipara, an outstanding luminary of the Church in India, stated that the Church in India is “*Indian in culture, Christian in religion and oriental in worship*”. He mentioned it to explain the indigenous character of the Church in India.

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<sup>1</sup> Speech of Dr Rajendra Prasad on 18th December 1955 inaugurating the St Thomas Day celebrations in New Delhi.



Popes too have not failed to refer to the apostolic origin and venerable heritage of the Church in India. In 1952 **Pope Pius XII**, on the occasion of the 19th Centenary celebration of the arrival of St Thomas in India, stated as follows in his official message.

During the centuries that India was cut off from the West and despite many trying vicissitudes, the Christian community formed by the Apostle (Saint Thomas) conserved intact the legacy he left them, and as soon as the sea-passage at the close of the 15th century offered a link with their fellow Christians of the West their union with them was spontaneous. *This Apostolic lineage, beloved sons and daughters, is the proud privileges of many among you who glory in the name of Thomas Christians, and we are happy on this occasion to acknowledge and bear witness to it.*<sup>2</sup>

On September 8, 1980, on the occasion of the 'ad limina' visit of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy **Pope John Paul II** greeted them making special reference to the origin of their Church from St Thomas, which had already formed an integral part of the Indian reality.

It is equally true that religious harmony was characteristic of our religious tradition especially of Kerala. It was our age-old tradition to build churches, temples and mosques in the vicinity. The ancient churches did not externally differ in their architecture from the Hindu temples except for the cross put up on the top. There was very close religious collaboration which was publicly manifested on occasions of their solemn festivals. There was very close mutual relations and similarity in their ascetic practices and celebration of

the religious festivals. It was a centuries old tradition in Kerala to invite Thomas Christian families to live in the vicinity of the Hindu temples. It was an expression of their mutual respect and spiritual affinity.

## 2. Regional Affinity and the Syriac Liturgical Heritage

The Church in India did not exist in isolation. The Christians lived in harmony with the followers of other religious traditions of India. Ecclesiastically they formed part of the common liturgical tradition which developed among the Churches of St. Thomas tradition.. The Syriac form of worship was spontaneously accepted as part of their religious heritage. Similarly during the process of Aryanization of India Sanskrit too was welcomed by the people of India. When Islam had its origin in the Asian context it was also welcomed. Sanskrit, Arabic and Syriac were accepted as the religious languages though they were not the vernacular.

This form of worship was shared by the Churches which had their origin and development in the East outside the Roman Empire. It has emerged from the biblical background and is deeply rooted in the earliest Christian tradition. The liturgical traditions were never viewed on nationalistic basis. The forms of worship had developed in important centres of ecclesiastical learning and were spontaneously accepted by the People of God of the neighbouring regions. It is quite evident in the history of Christianity. Regional grouping of the neighbouring Churches was a spontaneous development during the early centuries. The liturgy formed the basis of their faith traditions and it was celebrated by means

2 AAS, 1953 pp. 96-97.



of common symbols and rituals. These faith expressions were generally known and accepted by the early Christian communities. The early Christianity was deeply convinced of the apostolic origin of their form of worship.

The deep attachment of the Thomas Christians to the Syriac language is expressed in their letter written in 1578 from Angamaly addressed to Pope Gregory XIII:

O, Supreme Pastor of all Christians, we, your sinful and unworthy sons of India, wish to inform you that we have been Christians from the time of Saint Thomas the Apostle, a disciple of Our Lord. Thus we have become sharers of the Baptism, sacraments and the Body of Our Lord. Our worship (liturgy) is in the Syriac language which was handed down to us by our Father St Thomas. Our fore-fathers and we ourselves are well instructed in this (Syriac) language.<sup>3</sup>

The St. Thomas Christians esteemed their East Syrian liturgical heritage as an integral part of their apostolic heritage. Their attachment to this language and liturgy was very deep rooted. The following statement of Administrator Thoma Paremmakkal reacting against the latinising policy of the European missionaries, manifests the profound attachment to their Syriac heritage.

From the time the apostle St. Thomas was in our country and gave us the treasure of the holy faith, we have been, until today, without any break, performing our ecclesiastical ceremonies and practices in

the Syriac rite. Your predecessors tried their best to change this ancient Syriac rite of ours. But they realised that they could not. What then is your aim? Is it better than that of your predecessors?<sup>4</sup>

In the process of the spread of Christianity in the East the most ancient cultural heritage of India known as the *Indus Valley Civilization* with its Sumerio-Dravidian affinity provided a remote cultural link with the East Mediterranean regions. The influential and effective presence of Jewish merchants and their colonies from the Middle East had paved the way for the arrival of the Apostle St Thomas. Aramaic was the commercial language of the East from 5<sup>th</sup> century B. C. The earliest Christian communities too developed along the same centres of the Jewish colonies and the Christian converts of these places were naturally familiar with the Syriac form of the Aramaic language. Indians hold the languages of revelation in high esteem. Sanskrit is being used by the Hindus though it is not the vernacular. Similarly the Muslims of India use the Arabic language as their religious language though it is not their vernacular.

### Spread of the Liturgical Families

At the ecclesiastical level the Church of Rome and its form of worship spread into the Western world irrespective of their racial, cultural, linguistic and national differences. For example, the Roman Church with its Latin liturgical tradition gradually spread into North Africa, England, Ireland, Scandinavian countries, Switzerland, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal and later during the colonial

3 Archiv. Vat. Secreto, Armad. VII, Caps. No.14.; Samuel Giamil, *Genuinae relationes*...Rome, 1902,p.85.

4 Paremmakkal Thomakathanar, *Varthamanappusthakam*, transl. by P. J. Podipara, Rome, 1971, p. 247.



period it spread also into North and South Americas and Afro-Asian countries.

The Alexandrian form of worship which had its origin in Egypt was shared by the neighbouring Church of Ethiopia. Similarly the Antiochian liturgy was welcomed in Syria and Lebanon and only from the 17th century also into India. The same kind of regional or territorial affinity of the Churches can be observed among the different individual Churches which accepted the Byzantine liturgy. From the Byzantine Greek world it spread also into the neighbouring Slavic countries. Constantinople, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Albania, Russia, Byelorussian, Hungary, Serbia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Poland, Czechoslovakia etc. form part of the Byzantine liturgical family.

The Christianity which had developed in the East outside the Roman Empire began to be known as *the Church of the East*. The Church of the St Thomas Christians of India which also existed in the East outside the Roman Empire formed part of the regional grouping of the Church of the East. The special relation of these Churches with the apostle St Thomas strengthened their mutual ties and solidarity. The liturgical tradition which developed within the Churches of the St Thomas tradition was welcomed by all the Christians in the East, including China, Mongolia, India and the various islands of the region. This regional grouping of the Churches was not at all objected on the basis of nationalism. The practical autonomy of the local Churches enabled them to develop their own indigenous identity. For example, though the Church of the Thomas Christians of India formed part of the regional grouping of the Church of the East, they had their own administrative system which differed from that of the Persian Church. In the

liturgical traditions also there were certain local differences. The Churches outside the Roman Empire did not share the ecclesiastical administrative systems which had developed within the Roman World.

The history of the great religions of Asia teaches us that they were not at all confined within the barriers of the nations of their origin. In the Christian tradition also we can observe various spiritual movements spreading across the national borders. The great monastic movements which had developed in the East were warmly welcomed into the West. Similarly at a later period many Religious Orders which had their origin and development in the concrete context of the Western Europe, have in course of time spread also into the Afro-Asian countries admitting adherents from all over. It is true that India was well known from very ancient times for its saints, sages and monasticism. But, this religious and monastic heritage did not stand in their way of welcoming the Religious Orders, Congregations and Societies from the West which still have their central administrative head quarters in Europe. Thus history teaches us that the faith traditions of the great religions, their forms of worship and spiritual heritage were never confined to any particular country. Similarly many Religious Orders and Congregations which have their origin in the Afro-Asian world have drawn inspiration from the Religious movements in the West. Spiritual values and related movements are by their very nature universal. The same phenomenon can be observed also in the spreading of the liturgical traditions of the Churches.

The Churches are grouped mainly on the basis of their liturgical tradition. The particular form of worship of a Church has a unique role in determining and specifying its identity.

The Eucharistic sacrifice, sacraments, feasts and fasts, administrative systems, hierarchical set-up, discipline, ecclesiastical calendar, vestments, traditions etc. are different aspects which contribute to the distinctiveness of the individual Churches.

### 3. Misunderstanding of the Nature of the Catholic Church

Some people misunderstand the Catholic Church as a monolithic religious organization with a monarchical structure. This impression is evident in the recent articles of Gurumurthy published in *The New Indian Express* (Oct. 28, 2000). It seems that Gurumurthy is under the impression that the Catholic Church is a monarchical religion under the Pope. It is not so. The Catholic Church is a communion of different Churches which have got their own identity. They are not carbon copies of any other Church. Each Church has inherited particular form of worship, ascetic practices, administrative system, theological heritage, traditions etc. The Vatican Council II has rediscovered the true nature of the Catholic Church as a communion and teaches as follows:

The Church, Holy and Catholic... is made up of the faithful who are organically united in the Holy Spirit through the same faith, the same sacraments and the same government and who combining into various groups held together by a hierarchy form separate Churches or rites.<sup>5</sup>

The document of the same Council on the Constitution on the Church states:

By divine providence it has come

about that various churches established in diverse places by the apostles and their successors have in the course of time coalesced into several groups, organically united, which, preserving the unity of faith, and the unique divine constitution of the universal Church, enjoy their own discipline, their own liturgical usage, and their own theological and spiritual heritage.<sup>6</sup>

In India the Catholic Church is represented by three different Church traditions i. e. the Syro-Malabar Church, Syro-Malankara Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church or the Latin Church. The Roman Catholic Church was introduced mainly from the sixteenth century onwards. St. Francis Xavier (1506 –1552), a Spaniard of the Religious Order of the Society of Jesus has played a unique role in its rapid expansion. Though these three are distinct individual Churches they equally belong to the Catholic Church. Each Church follows its own form of worship, spiritual practices, disciplinary system, theological heritage and traditions. But Gurumurthy and those who think alike have misunderstood the Catholic Church as a papal monarchy with a uniform structure.

In 1653, the representatives of the Thomas Christians solemnly declared that they and their posterity would not obey the Portuguese bishops and the alien system imposed on them. The reaction continued and the Thomas Christians were gradually divided into different groups. The Syro-Malabar Church, Syro-Malankara Catholic Church and the Latin or Roman Catholic Church form part of the Catholic Church in India.

5 Oriental Churches, No. 2.

6 sssConstitution on the Church No. 23.



#### 4. National Churches

Gurumurthy, Sudarshan and others, want the creation of national Churches in India. As we have seen above the Catholic Church is the communion of different Churches. Man-made national barriers cannot limit its fellowship. Patriotism is a virtue. Freedom, equality and fraternity have to be upheld at the national and international level. Christ founded it in space and time. It is visible in its organizational set up. The whole organizational structure of the Church stands for the gospel values of love, compassion, universal brotherhood, self-effacing service etc. The Church firmly professes that God is the common Father of humanity and the human beings are His children. They believe in the abiding spiritual presence of Jesus Christ in the human community and especially in the Church. Christ founded the Church with a basic structure as a means to achieve its goal in the world. It is not at all a monarchical structure with a monarch to rule over it but a communion of the believers who are to be assisted by an ordained leadership. Hence any attempt to isolate the Church from its basic structure is equal to the denial of the Church founded by Christ.

At the same time we have to admit that though the Church is holy it consists of sinners from the top to the bottom. History teaches us the need of repentance and reform. History repeats itself and hence the Church needs continuous reform and renewal. But the attempt of Gurumurthy to isolate the "religion of Christianity" from its basic structure results from the ignorance of the true nature of the Church founded by Jesus Christ.

#### 5. Conflict with National Kings

Gurumurthy seems to hold that there is an innate rivalry between the Catholic Church and

the national leadership. It is not so. A Christian has to be patriotic and loyal to his nation and at the same time should believe in his solidarity with the whole human family which is based on the fundamental principles of human fraternity and Divine Paternity. Human solidarity and brotherhood are basic supra-national principles. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of love and compassion irrespective of caste, creed, religion or nation. The leadership of the Church is supposed to play its role as *servants of the People of God*. In his official teaching addressed to the whole Christian community the Pope starts with the formula "*servant of the servants of God*".

At the same time it is a fact of history that due to various social, religious and political factors Papacy was forced to develop a secular kingdom in the West which is known in history as *Papal States*. Pope was its king. The Papal monarchy existed from 754 up to 1870. It came to an end at the time of the unification of Italy under the leadership of Victor Emmanuel, Cavour and Garibaldi. During these centuries the papacy was playing political as well as religious roles in Europe. When Christianity became the official religion of Europe the role of the Popes was very decisive. Whenever Europe was threatened either by disintegrating forces from inside or by aggressive forces from outside it was the turn of the Papacy to intervene to end disputes or to unify and to build up human solidarity.

In such a politico-religious context of Europe there were cases of conflicts with kings who had violated the Christian morals. For example, the conflict with the King Henry VIII (1509-1547) of England was on the occasion of his attempt to divorce his wife Catherine and marry Anne Bolyne. It was a clear violation of the Christian morals and the

Pope intervened and at a later stage excommunicated the king. In a moment of emotional tension this judgement from the Papal court was interpreted as the intervention of a foreign ruler. National feelings than reason and moral values prevailed among a section of the people who supported their king. Henry passed the *Law of Supremacy* and declared the Church of England as a National Church according to which their king is the ultimate religious head who is not to be judged by anybody else. Hence it began to be known as the Church of England or the Anglican Church. But the Catholic Church did not accept it. Consequently its members were persecuted. Similarly there were cases of conflicts with the kings of France, Germany etc. At the time of the Protestant Revolt a number of rulers supported Martin Luther who had challenged the basic doctrines and structure of the Catholic Church. Pope intervened which ultimately led to the division of Europe into Catholic, Protestant or Anglican. Later during the time of the French Revolution there was an attempt to declare their church as national. The leaders of the Revolution declared their Church as national and wanted the clergy and the people to accept a national religious constitution. They even dedicated the Notre Dame cathedral of Paris to the goddess of reason! But such a system did not last for long and at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was given up by the political leadership.

Gurumurthy and Sudarsan may be envisaging national Churches like those originated in England after King Henry VIII, in Germany after the Protestant Revolt or in France soon after the French Revolution!. Divisions might occur in the Catholic Church, but they cannot continue to be in the Catholic

Church without having the same faith and communion.

## 6. Carbon Copies of the Western Church

Gurumurthy asks the following question: "*Should the Church in India remain a carbon copy of the Western or Roman Church?*" He puts forward a valid question.

The answer is quite simple and straight forward. The *Catholic* Church is against every kind of blind imitation. A Church should never become a carbon copy of another Church. Carbon copies have neither any identity of their own nor have got any right for existence apart from the original copy. There cannot be any difference at all for a carbon copy! Even if the carbon copies disappear nothing is lost as long as the original copy remains. Any attempt from within or without for blind imitation of another Church should be opposed at all cost. The history of the Church in India provides us with valid examples of such unfortunate instances.

Up to the 16<sup>th</sup> century the ancient Christian community in India remained united and they were called St Thomas Christians of India. When the Portuguese arrived in India these native Christians welcomed them as fellow Christians and the initial mutual relations were very cordial. But gradually the foreigners tried to impose their cultural and religious practices on the Thomas Christians. Moreover, they ruled over them from 1599 up to 1896. It was met with almost unanimous resistance, which reached its climax on January 3, 1653. They publicly manifested it by a solemn public protest at Mattancherry near Cochin. It is popularly known as *Koonan Cross Oath*. But the foreigners did succeed to rule over a



major section of the community for nearly three centuries. Finally, they did succeed to get their own native bishops in 1896 and are now called "*The Syro-Malabar Church*".

## 7. Neo - Colonialism in India

By *neo-colonialism* we mean the attitude of those Indians who continue the colonial system without an adequate understanding of their own cultural, social and religious heritage and identity. They may boast of cultural heritage without understanding what is their own and blindly follow the western colonial system. It is a continuation of socio-religious colonialism by the Indians themselves! Lack of respect of their own heritage is a typical symptom of neo-colonialism.

In the recent *National Consultation on Evangelization* held at Pune it was decided that the Church in India should part with all those titles which have their origin in the feudal or imperial system of the West.

Bishops and priests should see their role as pastors and leaders. In this context, imperial titles such as "Excellency", "Eminence", "Grace", "Lord", etc. be dropped.

In this context the observations of Yves Congar on ecclesiastical titles are thought-provoking.<sup>7</sup>

It is important for our discussion to recognize that the feudal age has left its traces behind it. We can attach what importance we like to them. *Dominus* carries little weight in 'Dom' So and so,

and *Monsignor* is no less inoffensive. Titles such as 'my *Lord Bishop*' are, or should be, the province of local history societies, together with old titles vested in chapters, which only rarely survive nowadays and are reflected in a few details of costume. Generally speaking, feudalism is a thing of the past. And yet surely there still clings about bishops and the Curia an aura of feudal privilege expressed in dress, insignia, 'retinue', the deference paid to them, all the trappings of heraldry? The economic and social structures of feudalism have disappeared, but some vestiges still remain on the surface, and occasionally titles still have some real value: but they are mainly external, part and parcel of the nature of man in his physical state.<sup>8</sup>

Congar points out the origin of episcopal ring, pastoral staff etc.

It is in Visigothic Spain in the seventh century, in Gaul in the eighth, that we first find the *crozier*, or at least the Pastoral Staff (*baculus, virga*); this was unknown in Rome before the eleventh century, although the bishop of Rome appears in the eighth century bearing a *ferula* (pastoral staff). The episcopal ring appears in the century in Spain and Gaul.<sup>9</sup>

In this context the anachronism in conferring titles like *Monsignor* (Mon seigneur = My Noble Man) to priests and Chevalier (Caballus = horse: soldier cadet) to laymen in India is self evident. Christianity should never become a venue for perpetuating the western feudal titles and uniforms.

7. Resolution No 47, *Paths of Mission in India Today, Statement of the National Consultation on Mission*, 4 - 9 January 1994, Pune, p. 19.

8. Yves Congar, *Power and Poverty in the Church*, transl. By Jennifer Nicholson, Geoffrey Chapman, London-Dublin, 1965, pp. 122-23.

9. *Ibidem* p. 118.

## Examples of neo-colonialism:

### 1. Adoption of Western Patterns of Religious Life

Though Indian monasticism is well known for its saints and sages at present the western type of Religious Congregations prevails in India. Though some of them are Indian in origin their pattern of religious life is purely western. The attempts to return to the authentic sources of eastern monasticism have not yet made any remarkable success. The failure of the Western Church in this field has led many to approach Hindu and Buddhist temples and monasteries of the eastern countries. In this context the Eastern Churches in India have a particular vocation to develop eastern monasticism. But the members of these Eastern Churches are being made members of the Religious Congregations of the Western type! In this context the following words of Pope John Paul II are prophetic:

With regard to monasticism, in consideration of its importance in Eastern Christianity, we would like it to flourish once again in the Eastern Catholic Churches, and that support be given to all those who feel called to work for its revitalization. In fact, in the East an intrinsic link exists between liturgical prayer, spiritual tradition and monastic life. For this reason precisely, a well-trained and motivated renewal of monastic life could mean true ecclesial fruitfulness for them as well.<sup>10</sup>

### 2. Ignorance of the Sources of Indian culture and Fanatic Nationalism

Those who are not aware of the rich sources of the Indian culture are prone to think of the Indian culture in isolation. India is not

a cultural island. It has been maintaining cultural interaction from very ancient period. The present territorial borders of India is only half century old. Eminent historians who are delved deep into the sources of Indian culture and civilization have brought to the attention of the world the close relation of the ancient Dravidian culture with the Sumerian culture. This ancient heritage is not the exclusive monopoly of any particular nation. Jawaharlal Nehru has brought this cultural affinity in his monumental work *The Discovery of India*. S.V. Venkateswara in his studies on Indian culture makes the following statement: "Dravidian culture can be affiliated not only to the *Asura* or *Mundari*, but to foreign cultures like the Sumerian, Chaldean, Aegean, Etruscan and Egyptian".<sup>11</sup>

To those who identify the Indian culture with the Aryan - Vedic civilization Will Durant makes the following observation:

Farther south of the land was occupied by the dark-skinned, broad-nosed people whom, without knowing the origin of the word, we call Dravidians. They were already a civilized people when the Aryans broke down upon them; their adventurous merchants sailed the sea even to Sumeria and Babylon, and their cities knew many refinements and luxuries. It was from them, apparently, that the Aryans took their systems of land-tenure and taxation. To this day the Deccan is still essentially Dravidian in stock and customs, in language, literature and arts.<sup>12</sup>

The Indo-Aryans have invaded India from the North-West from 2500 BC. There were waves of immigrations spread through

10. *Oriente Lumen*, no. 27

11. (S. V. Venkateswara, *Indian Culture Through the Ages*, reprint New Delhi, 1980, p. 10).

12. Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, Part I, New York, 1964, p. 396.



centuries. The Rig-Veda, which is the oldest Vedic literature deal with the culture of the Aryans and their fight with the non-Aryan natives. In this context V. D. Mahajan quotes from *Rig-Veda* "We are surrounded on all sides by *Dasvu* tribes. They do not perform sacrifices; they do not believe in anything. Their rites are different; they are no men. O! destroyer of foes, kill them. Destroy the *Rasa* race"<sup>13</sup>

The non-Aryans were called *Dasas*, *Dasyus*, *Asuras*, *Krishna* (dark or black) anasas (noseless or short-nosed). The attempt to identify the Indian culture with the Aryan culture is very superficial. It is rather strange that some Catholic training centers in India have followed this trend under the pretext of inculturation! They have got only a very partial view of the Indian cultural heritage. It is another form of neo-colonialism.

### 3. Blind Imitation of the Roman Traditions

#### a) Celebration of the Liturgy

The root of the recent liturgical controversy in the Syro-Malabar Church is a valid example of neo-colonialism i.e. blind imitation by becoming carbon copies of the Roman Church. A section of the Syro-Malabar leadership wants to follow a recent practice of the western Church of celebrating the Holy Sacrifice (Holy Qurbana) facing the people. But the unanimous tradition of all the Eastern Churches is to celebrate Holy Qurbana turning their attention to the Holy place, the sanctuary. They never celebrate the Holy Sacrifice turning their back to the Holy place, Those who want to follow Roman tradition argue that the Pope celebrate the liturgy facing the people. The Popes are against such blind imitation of the Roman Church by the Easterners. It is strange

that people try to become more Catholic than the Pope. The Roman Directive is explicit in this matter:

a) "The introduction of Holy Mass facing the people was done without any approval of the Holy See.

b) The tradition in this matter remains the ideal and clearly represents the will of the Holy See in this matter.

The Eucharist celebrated facing the community certainly runs counter to the basic approach to worship in any eastern tradition worth the name.

c) The celebration, therefore, is not to be facing the people but in conformity with the normal way of standing at the altar in the Oriental direction."<sup>14</sup>

#### b) Church Architecture and St Thomas Cross

The Thomas Christians used to build their churches in the indigenous architectural style. Externally they looked very similar to the Hindu temples. But even at present though much discussions are going on the need of inculturation the churches are being generally built in the western architectural (*Gothic, Roman, Baroque etc.*) style with expensive facades. Moreover, in the Christian tradition there are different types of crosses. Almost every Church has developed and adopted a particular type of the cross as its own. For example, in Jerusalem where Jesus Christ was crucified the Armenian, Russian Orthodox, Syrian, Melchite and Latin Churches have put up their own particular type of the cross. The St Thomas Christians of India also had developed their own particular type of the cross. Though they have shared the same liturgical tradition with the neighbouring

13. V. D. Mahajan, *Ancient History of India*, New Delhi, 1981, p. 49.

14. Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy, (OIRSI) No. 213, 1999, pp. 130-31.

Church of Persia they had their own particular cross. But during the colonial rule the western type of the crosses began to be introduced. At present the attempt of those who desire to restore and foster the indigenous form of the cross is opposed by the neo-colonialists.

The missionaries of the 16th century have not failed to refer to the traditional form of the church buildings and crosses of the indigenous Christianity.

The old churches were all built in pagoda-fashion, but all full of crosses like those of Saint Thomas miracle, which cross is called St Thomas. Hence one can see how much older than Portuguese times is the veneration, love, and the shape of this cross. For the ancient Christian churches, built long before the coming of the Portuguese, were all ornamented with them, both painted and graven.<sup>15</sup>

The Government of India published the St. Thomas Cross as a postal stamp in 1972 to commemorate the 19th centenary of the death of the Apostle St. Thomas in India. But recently a section of the Syro-Malabar clergy who are familiar only with the cross of the Latin Church have even dared to call this cross as Manichean! These enthusiasts do not seem to know that the Manicheans have no cross at all! Scorn for scholarship and fanaticism of blind imitation are the natural results from a neo-colonial mentality. For them the Western Church is the only model to be followed!

#### 4. Neo-colonialism and Clerical Formation

Neocolonialism is being continued mainly through clerical and religious formation. From 1599 up to 1653 the Church of the Thomas Christians of India as a whole and up to 1896

a major section among them were ruled over by foreign missionaries from Europe. After almost three centuries of liberation struggle the Thomas Christians succeeded in getting indigenous bishops. But the formation of the clergy continued to be under the foreign missionaries. Even in Kerala though all the students were of the locality the Major seminaries of Alwaye was under the Carmelites (OCD) from Europe. It was an anomalous situation and the Syro-Malabar Church was asked by Rome to have their own indigenous training center under their own qualified leadership. Rome generously assisted this Church to build a Seminary of their own at Vadavathoor near Kottayam. But the Syro-Malabar hierarchy under the leadership of late Cardinal Joseph Parecattil of Ernakulam unanimously decided to appoint a European as its Rector. But Rome intervened, disapproved such a move and asked the Syro-Malabar hierarchy to appoint qualified personnel of their own Church to impart a proper formation in harmony with their venerable heritage. The leadership had to accept it. It was an eye-opener.

#### 5. Intolerance

Intolerance and imitation of the West are visible also among some Hindu brethren. Those who argue for National Churches and indigenous culture like RSS do not seem to be quite honest in their approach. Even in externals they try to imitate blindly the Europeans. Even their uniform and the name RSS are not Indian! I do not know how can they be justified in using belts made of leather! India is well known for its non-violence and peaceful co-existence. But the present violence against Christians of the same country is not at all in harmony with neither the spiritual or cultural heritage of India.

15. Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo, Coimbra, 1606*, p. 61



## 8. Conclusion

The Catholic Church in India is an integral part of the religious heritage of India. It forms part of the communion of Churches. In the Catholic communion every Church has got its own specific identity. It is unity in diversity. In other words, the unity of the Catholic Church is a reconciled diversity. There is unity in faith, sacraments, leadership and morals. But at the same time there is rich diversity in their forms of worship, discipline, theological thinking, ascetic and spiritual practices, art, architecture etc. These Churches belong to six different liturgical families. It means that though these Churches form part of the catholic communion they are not at all carbon copies of another Church. The Vatican Council II teaches that *"it is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual Church retain its traditions whole and entire while adjusting its way of life to the various needs of time and place."*<sup>16</sup>

The Catholic Church does not consist of national Churches. Every Church is universal and not at all confined to a particular territory. Religious movements cannot be limited exclusively to any particular territory. The catholicity of the Church consists in its unity in diversity. In the Catholic Church there is room for legitimate diversity. But those who have not understood this basic nature identify unity with uniformity. We have cited above examples of the kind even among the Catholics! It is a kind of neo-colonialism. The distinctiveness of the different individual Churches within the Catholic communion is not on national basis but on the ground of their identity enshrined in their venerable heritage.

During the course of the centuries in the history of the Church there have been cases of conflicts with national kings. But it was not on the ground of their national identity as Gurumurthy claims. The conflicts were generally in matters of faith, discipline and morals which endangered the unity of the Church. At the same time it is a fact of history that there were also cases of exploitation by the westerners during the colonial period. There were attempts to rule over the natives. The history of the religions provides examples of such exploitation. Crusades and Inquisition form part of western religious history while *Sati*, *Caste* distinction etc. are part of the Indian religious history! Neo-colonialism is also another result. They do not feel shy at all in accepting and conferring western medieval feudal titles and uniforms! Many of those Indians who lament about the legislation of the new Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches (CCEO = *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium*) published from Rome in 1990 may not be aware of the fact that it was formulated under the chairmanship of an Indian Cardinal belonging to the Oriental Churches.

The advice of Sri Gurumurthy to establish national Churches is not at all a solution to the religious and social problems in India. History continues to teach us that the Churches which claim to be national are not at all free from grave problems. Patriotism is a virtue but narrow-minded nationalism is a threat. When nationalism deteriorates into religious fundamentalism it becomes extremely dangerous to the unity and harmony of the nation. A sincere Catholic has to be patriotic, deeply committed to the society and at the same time open to the whole human family.

16. *Oriental Churches* No. 2.

# THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF *COMMUNICATIO IN SACRIS*

Philip Nelpuraparampil

In an age of pluralism and multiplied contacts among people of different religious affiliation, *Communicatio in Sacris* is a wide spread pastoral problem which requires not only clear directives but also clear and convincing theological motivation. We have very clear norms and directives regarding this question in Canon Law and the Ecumenical Directory '93 (the Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism).<sup>1</sup> It is necessary therefore, to know the theological principles leading to these directives and norms. Such an understanding is very important since the *Communicatio in Sacris* is a very sensitive question among the Christians, both Catholics and non-Catholics.

In the literal sense, *Communicatio in Sacris* is the active participation in a religious act of a Church which is not one's own. The usual application of the term is in the reception of the sacraments and sacramentals either by non-Catholics in the Catholic Church or by Catho-

lics from a non-Catholic Church. Here we discuss it in this ordinary sense of the terminology.

## 1. Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church

The present status of *Communicatio in Sacris* in the Church is based on the new accent given to the structure of the Church and its relation to the non-Catholic Churches and other ecclesial communities. The ecclesiology of Vatican II does not claim an exclusivity in the identification of the Catholic Church with the Church of Christ.<sup>2</sup> The theological concept that 'the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church' allows one to recognise the ecclesiality of the other Churches and ecclesial communities as being the means of salvation which participate in the true mission of the one Church of Christ and at the same time to affirm that the Catholic Church is the only complete realisation of the Church of Christ on earth.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, points out that the *Ecumenical Directory* has the status of a General Executory Decree. Therefore, it can neither broaden nor restrict the canonical norms. It can highlight the degree of flexibility where such exists within the law. See E. I. CASSIDY, "The Revised *Ecumenical Directory* of the Catholic Church: A Renewed Commitment to the Search for Christian Unity Ecumenism 117(1995) 1

2 *In hoc mundo ut societas constituta et ordinata subsistit in Ecclesia Catholica*. The pre Vatican II tension with regard to *communicatio in sacris* was due to the teaching of *Mystici Corporis*, which identified the Mystical Body of Christ with the Roman Catholic Church.

3 Cf. AS III/I, 176; UR 4; U.BETTI, "Chiesa di Cristo e Chiesa Cattolica", *Antonianvm* 61(1986) 742.



## 1.1 Communion Ecclesiology

The Ecumenical Directory '93 builds up its guidance and binding directives on the doctrinal basis that the Church is communion. This concept, that the Church is communion, is identified in the Directory as "a key concept which inspired the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council and to which recent Magisterium has given great importance."<sup>4</sup> The Directory repeats the doctrine of Vatican II that "the one Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him" and that "the entirety of revealed truth, of sacraments and of ministry that Christ gave for the building up of his Church and the carrying out of its mission is found within the Catholic communion of the Church."<sup>5</sup> This Conciliar teaching does not claim the exclusivity to the Catholic Church. Therefore, Pope John Paul II teaches: the elements of sanctification and truth present in the other Christian communities, in a degree which varies from one to the other, constitute

the objective basis of the communion, although imperfect, which exists between them and the Catholic Church. To the extent that these elements are found in other Christian communities, the one Church of Christ is effectively present in them.<sup>6</sup> The Directory presents the Catholic Church's claim to the possession of the fullness of the means of salvation as a possession that is inclusive rather than exclusive.<sup>7</sup> *Ut Unum Sint*<sup>8</sup> thus sees the source of Christian unity as Koinonia "in the Trinitarian unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit".<sup>8</sup>

The faithful are one because, in the Spirit, they are in communion with the Son and, in him, share in his communion with the Father. For the Catholic Church, then, the communion of Christians is none other than the manifestation in them of the grace by which God makes them sharers in his own communion, which is his eternal life.<sup>9</sup> This communion ecclesiology rooted in the Triune God is the theological basis of the *communicatio in sacris*.

4 *Ecumenical Directory* 93. n. 12.

5 *Ecumenical Directory* 93. n. 17. See also LG 8. The Orthodox Church also makes similar claims for itself. The 1989 Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem states that "Orthodox Church firmly believes that it contains the whole truth that it is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and the treasury of grace and truth". As quoted in G. R. EVANS, "Orthodox and Roman Catholic Ecclesiology: The Recent Scene and Residual Difficulties", *One in Christ* 30 (1994) 37.

6 *Ut unum sint*, 11. It is interesting to note that while UR 3 states that "For it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help towards salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained". The *Ecumenical Directory* 93. n. 17 does not use the word 'Catholic Church alone', in saying that the Catholic communion of the Church possesses the entirety of revealed truth, of sacraments and ministry. See J. M. HUELS, "The 1993 *Ecumenical Directory*: Theological Values and Juridical Norms", *The Jurist* 56 (1996) 405.

7 This approach of the *Ecumenical Directory* to 'communion' is considerably more ecumenically sensitive than that of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith's letter on communion, *Communio in Notio*. nn. 17-18.

8 *Ut unum sint*, 8c.

9 *Ut unum sint*, 9b. Koinonia was the theme of the Canberra Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1991 and of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order in Santiago de Compostela in 1993.

Therefore, it is widely discussed in the Ecumenical Directory 93.

## 1.2 The Eucharistic Ecclesiology

The emphasis on the eucharistic ecclesiology in the Second Vatican Council also gives a strong theological basis for the ecumenical process along with the sacramental sharing.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, wherever there is a Christian community that celebrates the Mass with constitutional validity, there is the Church of Christ in more or less its fullness. Due to the recognition of the apostolic succession, the priesthood and the valid Eucharist, the

ecclesiality is particularly acknowledged with regard to the Eastern non-Catholic Churches.<sup>11</sup> They are recognised as “particular Churches” or “sister Churches” because in every valid celebration of the Eucharist the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is made truly present.<sup>12</sup> Every valid eucharistic celebration requires the constitutive structure of the Church as an organically structured priestly body. Therefore, it also presupposes the bond of communion with the proper bishop and of this bishop with his brother bishops and with its head as a College which is the continuation of the Apostolic Body. Hence, in the

10 SC 41; LG 3b, 11b, 26a; CD 30; UR 2a. Gerardo J. Bèkès, while discussing the ecclesiological developments after the Second Vatican Council, points out the deep relation between the liturgy, especially that of the Eucharist and the nature of the Church from the teachings of the Church. See G. J. BEKES, “The Eucharist makes the Church; The Ecclesial Dimension of the Sacrament”, in R. Latourelle (ed.), *Vatican II; Assessment and Perspectives*, Vol.2, New York 1982, 362. The Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church has an agreed statement on this topic of Eucharistical Ecclesiology. See “The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the light of the mystery of the Holy Trinity” (Munich, 1982) in P. McPARTLAN (ed.), *One in 2000? Towards Catholic Orthodox Unity*, Middlegreen, 1993, 37-52. In the Council, the schema presented by the Preparatory Theological Commission for the Decree on Ecumenism considered the relationship of the separated Churches and communities to the Catholic Church in the context of a ‘eucharistic concept’ of Church unity. The schema insists that for fullness, this notion of unity presupposes unity in faith and the unity of the universal Church hierarchically organized within precise juridical structures. This schema has the great merit of introducing notion of a profound relationship between eucharistic communion and ecclesiastical communion, which had been generally absent from official Church documents since post patristic period. For the English translation of the schema presented by the Theological Commission see *One in Christ* 4 (1967) 474-475.

11 Cf. UR 15c; See also A. BEA, “The Eucharist and the Union of Christians” *Diakonia* 4 (1966), 242-245.

The 1988 statement of the North American Orthodox-Roman Catholic consultation recognise that disagreement between the Catholics and Orthodox Churches is mainly centred on the way in which the leadership exercised by Peter in expressing and confirming the faith of the other disciples is to be realised in Church life. The Orthodox have emphasised that the role of Peter within the Apostolic College. They accepts ‘the primacy of honour’ as a *primus inter pares* to the Bishop of Rome. The Catholics understanding of Petrine Primacy consisting of many elements such as universal jurisdiction with and as the head of the council of bishops. Cf. North American Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation, “Primacy and Conciliarity”, *Origins* 19 (1989) 471-472.

12 Cf. UR 14. In a large number of documents of Popes and Councils the Separated Eastern Churches are referred as ecclesia. See also the document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Note on the Expression “Sister Churches”, n.12. For the Orthodox concept of Eucharist and Church see, J. ZIZIOULAS, “The Eucharistic Community and Catholicity of the Church”, *One in Christ* 6 (1970) 319-327; G. LIMOURIS, “The Eucharist as the sacrament of sharing: An Orthodox point of view” in G. Limouris (ed.), *Orthodox visions of Ecumenism*, 248-269.



case of the Christian Churches separated from the Catholic communion, their valid eucharistic celebration objectively demands the communion with Peter.<sup>13</sup>

One of the greatest gains of the Constitution of the Second Vatican Council on the Sacred Liturgy, was the relationship that it set up between liturgy and ecclesiology. The 'liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows'.<sup>14</sup> The liturgical celebration, especially the celebration of Eucharist 'are not private functions but are celebrations of the Church which is the sacrament of unity namely the holy people united and arranged under their bishops'.<sup>15</sup> In the Constitution on the Church (LG 26) and in the Constitution on the Liturgy (SC 2, 47, and 48), the Eucharist is seen in its social and ecclesiological aspect as the symbol and effective cause of the unity of the Church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms that "the Eucharist makes the Church"<sup>16</sup> and that it is the "source and summit of ecclesial life".<sup>17</sup>

This ecclesiological thinking, based on the teachings of the Fathers of the Church and liturgy, could be visible in the later constitutions and decrees as well as in canonical legislations.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. Catholic Church and the Non-Catholic Churches

The Second Vatican Council, therefore, offered a changed theological perception of the ecclesial status of the separated brethren and of their Churches and ecclesial communities. It was a change as J. L. Witte points out as the vision of the exclusive Church changed into that of the inclusive Church; not inclusive in the sense of dominating over all, but as acknowledging that every Church is used by the Spirit of Christ as an instrument for the sanctification of its believers and is gifted with several visible elements of Church unity.<sup>19</sup>

This ecclesiology based on the traditional Patristic teachings made the Catholic Church explain the nature of the Church, the unity of

13 Cf. *Communio in Notio*. n. 14. The Orthodox Churches find it difficult to accept a Roman Primacy which differed from that of the first few centuries, even if some orthodox sense the need for a ministry of unity in a form different from the one presently exercised by the Patriarch of Constantinople. See TILLIARD, "Primacy", in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva, 1991, 822-825. The Pope is, in fact courageously asking for new ideas on how to exercise the Petrine ministry. Cf. *Ut unum sint*, 95.

14 SC 10.

15 SC 26.

16 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. n.1396.

17 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. n.1324.

18 G. Diekmann points out that "perhaps a decisive turning point of the entire council was its rejection of the proposed scheme on the Church, because, as Cardinal Suenens and Archbishop Martin of Rouen in memorable speeches most clearly voicing the dissatisfaction of the Council Fathers pointed out 'it did not correspond to the spirit and content of the ecclesiology already approved in the Constitution on the Liturgy'". See G. DIEKMANN, "The Constitution on the Liturgy in Retrospect", *Worship* 40 (1966) 410-411.

19 J. C. WITTE, "The basis of intercommunion", *Gregorianum* 51(1970) 103.

the Church, the ontological relationship of the Catholic Church with the separated Churches and ecclesial communities. The council clearly affirmed that the non-Catholic Churches enjoy a true, though imperfect, ecclesial communion with the Catholic Church. This ecclesiological outlook permitted a more positive application of the traditional principles for the *communicatio in sacris*.

This existing ontological bond of real though imperfect communion between the separated brethren and the Catholic Church makes the *communicatio in sacris* possible. It is also implied that there should be a proportion between the forms of *communicatio in sacris* allowed and the degree of ecclesial communion existing between the Catholic Church and the Church or ecclesial community to which the non-Catholic participant belongs. Moreover, reference to the personal situation of individual participants in *communicatio in sacris* is essential since only an individual, and not a community as such, can take part in the sacraments.

However, there are always some unresolved areas of tension in the theory and the emphasis given to the theological principles behind the practice of *communicatio in sacris*. They are the tension between the nature of the sacraments as means of grace and as signs of unity, the tension between the personal and ecclesial dimension of every sacramental celebration, and between the nature of the

sacraments, especially of the Eucharist, as a source of unity to be achieved and as a sign of unity already achieved.

### 3. General Principles

*Communicatio in Sacris* reflect two facts; the real communion in life of the Spirit which already exists among Christians and is expressed in the liturgical worship and the incomplete character of this communion because of differences of faith and understanding which are incompatible with an unrestricted mutual sharing of spiritual endowments.<sup>20</sup>

The general principles governing *communicatio in sacris* are enunciated by reference to the two-fold nature and function of worship. Worship as a sign of ecclesial unity generally rules out the possibility for *communicatio in sacris* but consider as a means of grace, it can sometimes be commended. We can recognise the ecclesial character of the separated Eastern Churches because of their sharing in many constitutive elements of the one Church of Christ, especially the Eucharist and the priesthood through apostolic succession.<sup>21</sup> This ecclesiological context has given ample space for the *communicatio in sacris* in the Catholic theology.

According to the Second Vatican Council's teaching on liturgy, the fullest revelation of the Church is in the celebration of the Eucharist

20 The *Ecumenical Directory* 93. n. 104c.

21 The *Ecumenical Directory* 93 states that the sharing of spiritual activities and resources must reflect this double fact: 1) The real communion in the life of the Spirit which already exists among Christians and is expressed in their prayer and liturgical worship; 2) the incomplete character of this communion because of differences of faith and understanding which are incompatible with an unrestricted mutual sharing of spiritual endowments. See *Ecumenical Directory* 93, 104c.



under the presidency of the bishop.<sup>22</sup> The Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of faithful gathered to celebrate the Eucharist in communion with the bishop.<sup>23</sup> These two principles are present in the Orthodox Churches.

The foundation of the sacramental communion with the separated communities of the West is the sacrament of baptism they receive. Baptism constitutes a sacramental bond of unity linking all who have been reborn through it. This bond is defective because it does not reach its fulfilment in the genuine and total reality of the Eucharist. Therefore, sacramental sharing is much more limited with the Protestants than with the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

The two council documents, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* and *Unitatis Redintegratio*, deal with the question of sacramental sharing in its own way. OE's methodology as an approach to *communicatio in sacris* is more practical while UR's is doctrinal. In OE, the main concern is for a solution to pastoral needs based upon a juridical-moral consideration of the validity and fruitfulness of the sacraments. It treats the sacramental sharing as a practical consequence

of the validity of the sacraments in the Eastern separated Churches and it examines the question prevalently from the point of view of *gratia procuranda*. The UR, which mainly uses the doctrinal approach, treats sacramental sharing from the point of view of *gratia procuranda* and, equally or more so, from the point of view of *significatio unitatis*.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.1 The Notion of Imperfect Ecclesial Communion

The notion of imperfect ecclesial communion is discussed in *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio* on the basis of the objective elements that constitute communion with the Church of Christ. *Lumen Gentium* points out some of the constitutive elements which can be found outside the Catholic Church, i.e., in the separated Churches and the ecclesial communities. They are the Sacred Scripture, Trinitarian belief, Baptism, other sacraments, in some cases the Episcopate and the Eucharist, and Marian devotion.<sup>25</sup> *Unitatis Redintegratio* uses the same approach, with emphasis on certain internal dynamic aspects of the Church's salvific mission: "the life of grace, faith, hope and charity and other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as also "many sacred actions that can truly engender a life of

22 SC 41.

23 LG 26.

24 Cf. B. FARRELL, *Communicatio in sacris A Theological Study of the Policy Adopted by the Second Vatican Council*, Roma 1984, 30. It is important to note that the Catholics readiness to enter into *communicatio in sacris* with the Orthodox suggests to many Orthodox theologians that Rome has retained a legal way of regarding ecclesiastical realities, looking at each sacrament and each doctrine as isolated facts and judging them accordingly, instead of acknowledging the inter-relatedness of all sacraments and doctrines in the unity of the Church's life so that an evaluation of the single elements, piece by piece, is not possible. Cf. G. BAUM, "Communicatio in sacris in the Decree on Ecumenism", *One in Christ* 3 (1967) 422.

25 Cf. LG 15.

grace, and can be rightly described as capable of providing access to the community of salvation.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the separated Churches and communities enjoy some degree of communion with the Church of Christ as it subsists in the Catholic Church, which is the communion of those who preserve all the essential ecclesial elements entrusted by Christ to his followers.<sup>27</sup> The Council placed emphasis on the objective bonds that connect the separated brethren to the Church and not on their subjective dispositions only.<sup>28</sup>

It is *Unitatis Redintegratio* that develops the notion of imperfect communion in a dynamic perspective.<sup>29</sup> The full ecclesial communion is proper to the Catholic Church consisting in the possession of all the endowments gifted by Christ to his Church. This communion is perfect when it reaches a degree of unity that is specifically qualified by the common profession of one faith, the same sacraments and one obedience.<sup>30</sup>

From the very beginning of the history of the Church, we see certain rifts and disagreements such that large communities became separated from the communion with the Catholic Church,<sup>31</sup> which alone represents the historical continuity of the original one Church of God.<sup>32</sup> The communities that separated from the communion no longer enjoy full communion. They no longer coincide in the common possession of all the endowments that constitute the true Church of Christ. However, there exists a true and real, though imperfect, communion between them and the Catholic Church because of the ecclesial elements they have faithfully preserved.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the communion existing between the Catholic Church and the separated Churches and communities arising out of the common possession of some of the constitutive elements of the Church is to be measured in relation to the objective value of the ecclesial elements held in common. The Council measures this objective value in relation to Eucha-

26 UR 3.

27 These texts enumerate and juxtapose the ecclesial elements. They do not attempt to graduate them according to their importance in the mystery of the Church. The ecclesial communion is both internal (in the order of grace) and external (belonging to the Church as a visible social reality). The Council documents do not concern with the nature of each element and the kind of communion its possession establishes with the single Churches and ecclesial communities. And the council limited its consideration to the objective elements of communion existing between the Church and separated brethren. Cf. FARRELL, *Communicatio in sacris*, 33.

28 It has the advantage of offering an objective “ontological” basis for permitting some form of common worship with them.

29 For a detailed description of the story of the Decree on Ecumenism and the *communicatio in sacris* dealt in the document see BAUM, “*Communicatio in sacris* in the Decree on Ecumenism”, 417- 428.

30 UR 2 states “Jesus Christ wishes his people to increase under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Thereby too, He perfects his People’s fellowship in unity (*communio perfectio in unitate*): in the confession of one faith, in the common celebration of divine worship, and in the fraternal harmony of the family of God.”

31 Cf. UR 3.

32 Cf. OE 2; LG 8.

33 Cf. UR 3.



rist, which is the source and sign of the fullness of ecclesial communion. Hence, the Eastern Churches because they preserve the true sacraments, especially by virtue of apostolic succession, the Priesthood and the Eucharist, are still joined to Catholic church in a very close relationship.<sup>34</sup>

The ecclesial communities of the West, because they lack the genuine reality of the Eucharist, lack this degree of communion.<sup>35</sup> However, even with these communities, the Council speaks of some degree of communion because they preserve certain objective elements of a common heritage.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.2 Imperfect Ecclesial Communion as the Basis of *Communicatio in Sacris*

Common worship in varying degrees, including participation in the sacraments, will be possible, from the strictly theological point of view which concerns us, in proportion to the degree of imperfect ecclesial communion existing between the Catholic Church and the separated brethren in question, a degree of communion determined by the quality of the ecclesial communion shared in common. This

is the position of the Council with regard to the *Communicatio in sacris* with the Eastern Churches.<sup>37</sup> It is on the Council's mode of reasoning that the post conciliar directives are safely based.

The Orthodox reaction to these ecclesiological insights was rather negative. While the Catholic Church considers the Orthodox Churches as being almost identical to herself in doctrine, worship and ministry, the Orthodox Churches were much more sensitive to the difference between themselves and Catholics.<sup>38</sup> Cardinal Bea, the first head of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity makes clear the Catholic stand on this point. He states:

In Catholic theology there is frequently repeated the principle that the sacraments were given for man, and that the salvation of souls is the supreme law. Therefore when one is dealing with the good of souls one can for serious reasons - while obviously taking all the necessary precautions- accept the risk of eventual misunderstanding about difference in belief and the absence of complete union with the Catholic Church. On the other hand,

34 Cf. UR 15.

35 Cf. UR 22.

36 Cf. UR 19. See also Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, n.17.

37 Cf. UR 15; "These Churches, although separated from us, yet possess true sacraments, above all-by apostolic succession-the priesthood and the Eucharist, whereby they are still joined to us in close intimacy. Therefore some worship in common (*communicatio in sacris*), given suitable circumstances and the approval of the Church authority, is not merely possible but is encouraged".

OE 26: "... with regard to our Eastern brethren, pastoral experience shows that various circumstances affecting individuals can and ought to be taken into account, where the unity of the Church is not harmed nor are there dangers to be guarded against, but where the need of salvation and the spiritual good of souls are prime considerations. Therefore, the Catholic Church, by reason of circumstances of time, place and persons, has often followed and still follows a less rigorous course of action, offering to all the means of salvation and a witness to charity among Christians, through a common sharing in the sacraments and in other sacred functions and things".

38 Cf. BAUM, "Communicatio in sacris in the Decree on Ecumenism", 422.

indiscriminate communion would result in an ambiguity, as the two decrees warn.<sup>39</sup>

### 3.3 *Communicatio in sacris* Beyond the Degree of Ecclesial Communion

The question of giving admission to a member of a Christian community that does not recognise or validly preserve the Catholic sacraments is rather complex. It cannot be justified on the basis of graduated or imperfect ecclesial communion between the Catholic Church and the community in question since they do not have a common sacramental faith and practice. The Council found certain aspects of the personal situation of the individual non-Catholic as justification for it which seems to indicate two complementary approaches:

1. The ecclesial status of individual non-Catholic Christians; and

2. Factors related to sacramental aspects of *Communicatio in sacris* which are verifiable in the personal situation of non-Catholic Christians.<sup>40</sup>

#### 3.3.1 The Ecclesial Status of Individual Non-Catholic Christians

Vatican II has developed the notion of the Church as the People of God where as earlier

documents like *Mystici Corporis*<sup>41</sup> proceed from the notion of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ identified with the visible reality of the Roman Catholic Church. It was a very bold step on the part of the Council Fathers to explain the relation between the Catholics and the ecclesial communities.<sup>42</sup> The Church recognises that she has a real though imperfect bond with the ecclesial communities.<sup>43</sup> The ecclesial status of these Churches lies in recognising the special value of their baptism as the fundamental sacramental bond that unites all Christians and constitutes an essential difference between them and the non-Christians. This bond of relation with ecclesial communities is imperfect, not only in the subjective level, where the separated brethren lack a conscious desire to enter the Catholic Church, but on the objective level, where the ecclesial elements shared in common are insufficient in relation to what Christ intended.

#### 3.3.2. Factors Related to Sacramental Aspects of *Communicatio in Sacris* Which are Verifiable in the Personal Situation of non-Catholic Christians

In the cases, where the separated Christian does not belong to a Church or community

39 BEA, "The Eucharist and the Union of Christians", 253-254.

40 Cf. FARRELL, *Communicatio in sacris*, 38

41 Pope Pio XII, Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis Christi*, AAS 35 (1943) 193-248.

42 By proceeding from the notion of the People of God, the Council appears not to offer a response to the question posed in *Mystici Corporis* but rather offers a response to a more contingent question: what is the relationship of Catholics, non-Catholics and the non-baptised to the Church of Christ subsisting in the Catholic Church but present in some way and to some degree outside the limits of the visible society of the Catholic Church. Using the concept of imperfect ecclesial communion, the Council opens the way for admitting a graduated scale of participation in the Church of Christ. See G.DEJAIFFE, "L'Eglise, Peuple de Dieu", *Nouvelle Revue Theologique* 103 (1981) 857-871.

43 Cf. LG 15.



that shares a common sacramental faith with that of the Catholic Church, the personal situation of the non-Catholic must be considered. *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* treats the Eastern separated brethren as individuals who may be permitted in certain circumstances to share in the Catholic sacraments. In these cases, the Catholic Church's relationship to the separated Christian taking part in her sacraments is based on theological factors verified in his personal situation. The factors of baptism,<sup>44</sup> faith as the necessary response of the non-Catholic towards it,<sup>45</sup> a situation of good faith in relation to the Catholic Church and a situation of need in relation to a given sacramental grace according to the teachings of the Council must be taken into consideration.

Baptism is a sacramental bond of union with the Catholic Church. While speaking about the Catholic faithful, the Council insist that through baptism they are incorporated into the Church. It is this same terminology that is used when the Council speaks of the

other Christians. The nature of this imperfect communion with the Catholic Church, which the separated Christians enjoy because of baptism, can only be understood in relation to the fullness of communion which Catholics enjoy because of being fully incorporated into the Church.<sup>46</sup> The imperfect communion would refer primarily to the level of fundamental ontological incorporation into Christ and his Church through the sanctifying gift of the Spirit giving access to the communion of salvation guaranteed by Baptism.<sup>47</sup> The imperfect communion is not a merely internal and subjective spiritual disposition in the order of intention. It has an external and visible aspect in the possession of some visible ecclesial elements such as Baptism, Sacred Scripture and worship. The Church is a spiritual community and visible society structured in a hierarchical way.<sup>48</sup> The imperfect communion would involve participation in both of these aspects of the Church. Hence, the fullness towards which the dynamic orientation inherent in baptism leads ultimately into a full participation in the Church

44 The Council texts when discussing the Catholic faithful, insists that through baptism they are incorporated into the Church. See LG 11, 14, 31; AA 3; AG. 6, 7. When it speaks about the separated brethren the Council prefers to emphasise their incorporation in to Christ. See LG 15; UR 3, 22. UR speaks not about incorporation into Christ, but of incorporation into the Church. It is because the separated brethren would certainly agree that through baptism they are incorporated into Christ and into his Church, but they would not say that they are thereby incorporated into the Catholic Church.

45 The question of relationship between faith and *communicatio in sacris* received only a very little attention in the Conciliar discussion. See SC 33.

46 Communion implies a participation in the Church, not only on the level of a fundamental ontological insertion into Christ and His Church, consist essentially in the Gift of the Holy Spirit but also on the level of the manifestation of this incorporation through participation in the visible social body of the Church as historically realised in the unity of Catholic faith and life under the Roman Pontiff, centre and sign of unity.

47 Cf. UR 3.

48 Cf. LG 8.

as a community of faith and a visibly organised society. Baptism confers a dynamic orientation towards this fullness and it does not give this fullness as already achieved.<sup>49</sup> This orientation towards the full participation in the sacramental life of the Church is present in all the baptised. In other words, baptism confers an inherent dynamism towards the realisation of the fullness of communion in the Eucharist. It is the theological foundation of the possibility of *Communicatio in sacris*.

### 3.3.2.1. Faith

The sacramental signs are considered in their signifying function by which they proclaim the faith of the Church and nourish the faith of the People of God.<sup>50</sup> The personal faith of those who part take in the sacraments, is nourished and expressed in the celebration of the sacraments.<sup>51</sup> But the council texts, in general, don't refer very much to the relationship between faith and *communicatio in sacris*.

The sacraments are professions of faith in

action. In receiving a sacrament one gives external witness to one's interior faith in the sanctifying power of the sign being celebrated, and it is the objective faith of the Church that assures continuity between the principle cause of salvation and the sacrament.<sup>52</sup> In the concrete celebration of a sacrament, it is the subject's faith that permits in him the fruitful actuation of the specific grace conferred and signified by the objective sign, which is the bearer of the sacrament's specific instrumentality. The recipient must profess a faith in the sacrament that corresponds to the faith of the Church proclaimed in each sacramental celebration.<sup>53</sup>

In common worship there are two forms. The first is when *communicatio in sacris* is a manifestation of ecclesial bonds which includes doctrinal bonds already existing between those participating because of the degree of ecclesial communion existing between their Churches.<sup>54</sup> Secondly there is the *communicatio in sacris* that takes place based on factors present in

49 Cf. UR 22; FARRELL, *Communicatio in sacris*, 38.

50 SC 33.

51 SC 59.

52 That is the continuity between the God working through the redemptive acts of Christ and the sacraments which is the instrumental cause of that salvation in the economy of Grace. The faith of the Church is the faith of the whole community as it responds to Christ in the power of the Spirit.

53 It is a generic faith in the essence of the Christian mystery of redemption effected by God through Christ and historically continued and applied through the Church and a specific faith in the mystery of redemption as communicated in the instrumentality of the particular sacrament being received, according to the symbolism of each one.

54 In the case of the Eastern Churches, the "almost complete ecclesiological communion" and the "very close communion in matters of faith" existing between the Catholic Church and the separated Churches assures that *communicatio in sacris* is not a sign of disunity in faith, but rather a celebration of the faith held in common. Cf. SPUC, *Instruction on Admitting Other Christians*, AAS 64 (1972) 520.



the personal situation of separated Christians.<sup>55</sup>

The non-Catholic Christian's faith is defective because it is not a public confession of the complete faith of the Church, but when it is the same faith in each respective sacrament as the faith professed and celebrated in Catholic sacraments, it constitutes, together with baptism, the structure of the theological possibility of *communicatio in sacris*. Other factors present in the personal situation of non-Catholic Christians determine the possible exercise of this theological possibility.<sup>56</sup> This is constituted by Baptism and faith.

### 3.3.2.2 Need

Only the Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches speaks explicitly of the need.<sup>57</sup> Situations of need are not merely extreme cases of necessity such as danger of death but rather situations that are not normal. This need is related to the function of the sacraments as means of grace. A situation of 'need' is part

of the structure of the theological possibility of *communicatio in sacris*, not an internal factor making common worship possible, but as a necessary external condition making it pastorally and ecumenically justifiable. Therefore, *communicatio in sacris* is always an exception and requires that a decision be made in each single case as to its possibility and justification.<sup>58</sup>

### 3.4 Respect for the Discipline of other Churches

The principles of *Communicatio in Sacris* of the Catholic Church was largely criticised by the Orthodox Churches. The principal theological reasons against it are related to the nature of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, as signs of unity in faith and communion in ecclesial life. Sacramental communion is not a means for the realisation of unity as such as it is for the nourishing of the unity.<sup>59</sup> Communion in common at the same table has to be just the communion of one Church. Therefore, unity is maintained and manifested through the one Eucharistic

55 It is based on the individuals own position or situation. *The Ecumenical Directory* 93 states that it is when they declare a faith in the sacraments in harmony with that of the Church. A study on this intercommunion is found in WITLE, "The basis of intercommunion", 105. He points out that the Churches have the task to try to express in their Eucharistic celebration the unity in Christ existing in their own Churches but, also, as far as possible, the already existing unity between their Churches, in order to promote the visible unity of the one Church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, intercommunion is commended any time that doctrinal and practical obstacles are overcome

56 Cf. *Ecumenical Directory* 93, n. 131. CCEO Can. 671§4 and CIC Can. 844§5

57 *Communicatio in sacris* may be permitted where the need of salvation and the spiritual good of souls are prime considerations and as a witness to charity among Christians. Cf. OE 26

58 FARRELL states that the *communicatio in sacris* can only be allowed when recourse to a minister of one's own Church is physically or morally impossible does not seem to belong to the essence of 'need'. It has its value in the present state of ecumenical relations with the separated brethren, but it is not a determining factor in the Catholic Theology. Cf. FARRELL *Communicatio in sacris*, 63-64

59 Cf. G. A. GALITIS, "Le probleme de l'intercommunion sacramentelle avec les non-Orthodoxes d'un point de vue Orthodoxe", *Istina* 14 (1969) 206.

fellowship.<sup>60</sup> Hence, there is either communion in the one Church or communion does not exist. The grade of communion is something unknown to the Orthodox ecclesiology. The Ecumenical Directory 93 recognises it and states that “the Eastern Churches, on the basis of their own ecclesiological understanding, may have more restrictive disciplines in this matter, which others should respect.”<sup>61</sup> The Catholics “must respect the Eastern discipline as much as possible and refrain from communicating if that Church restricts sacramental communion to its own members to the exclusion of others.”<sup>62</sup>

The Directory recommends mutual consultation on this sharing of sacramental life to seek out the possibilities for lawful reciprocity according to the doctrine and traditions of different communities. In the case of Orthodox Christians asking for the sacraments from Catholic ministers, “due consideration should be given to the discipline of the Eastern Churches for their own faithful, and any suggestion of proselitism should be

avoided.”<sup>63</sup> It must lead to a greater mutual understanding of each other's discipline and even an agreement on how to manage a situation in which the discipline of one Church calls into question or conflicts with the discipline of another.”<sup>64</sup>

## Conclusion

This theological study leads to the fact that the communicatio in sacris always contradicts the sign of unity to some degree, but sacraments are also means of grace. There are certain powerful motives for permitting it which are historically theologically, juridically, morally and ecumenically supported. It is necessary to explain this not only to the Catholics but also to the members of other Churches. Pope John Paul II instructs that “in so important and sensitive a matter, it is necessary for pastors to instruct the faithful with care, making them clearly aware of the specific reasons both for this sharing in liturgical worship and for the various regulations which govern it.”<sup>65</sup>



60 Cf. N. A. NISSIOTIS, “Worship, Eucharist and ‘Intercommunion’: An Orthodox Reflection”, *Studia Liturgica* 2 (1963) 213-214. Nissiotis discusses the Eucharistic sharing as intercommunion. According to him the prefix ‘inter’ points to a quite abnormal and unacceptable situation, implying a communion between two or more separated Church bodies, which after this intercommunion remain spiritually, organically and confessionally separated.

61 *Ecumenical Directory* 93. n. 122.

62 *Ecumenical Directory* 93. n. 124.

63 *Ecumenical Directory* 93. n. 125. According to the Orthodox theology, the reception of the Eucharist is intended not only to satisfy the personal spiritual needs of the communicant but also to signify the perfect unity of the Church.

64 Cf. *Ecumenical Directory* 93. nn. 106-107. In this regard the orthodox theologian, A. Schmemmann states: “An Orthodox commentator must stress however, that even a partial solution of this problem (*communicatio in sacris*) must be a bilateral action and that, given its crucial importance, it must express, on the Orthodox side, the consensus of all Orthodox Churches.” See A. SCHMEMMANN, “A Response”, in W. M. Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II*, London 1966, 388.

65 *Ut unum sint*, 58.



# “UT UNUM SINT”: A RESPONSE

Kurian Valuparampil

## Introduction

Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (*That All May be One*) (May 5, 1995) extended his invitation “to Church leaders and their theologians to engage with him in a patient and fraternal dialogue” on the subject of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome and the way in which this ministry of unity is exercised<sup>1</sup> in particular, and on the commitment to ecumenism in general. This invitation appeared quite an unexpected one to some. Many Churches and ecclesial communities have readily responded both individually and collectively, officially and unofficially. The respondents have noticed some of the welcoming points and raised questions and challenges in their responses. What follows in the few pages down here is a response of a priest of the Malankara Catholic Church (MCC) on his own accord in the interest of the whole Church. A detailed analysis is not attempted here.

## Not Unexpected

The Holy Father’s above mentioned invitation from his side was not an all-on-a-sudden outburst. In 1984 during his visit to the WCC in Geneva the Pope acknowledged that the Petrine ministry of the Bishop of

Rome, which the Catholic Church sees as “the visible sign and guarantor of unity, constitutes a difficulty for most other Christians.”<sup>2</sup> *UUS* 95 only reiterates what in 1987 the same Pope had spoken in similar terms to Patriarch Dimitrios I. The Holy Father had admitted to the Patriarch that the ministry of the Bishop of Rome, “what should have been a service sometimes manifested itself in a very different light.”<sup>3</sup> His Holiness Pope John Paul II has since long been aware that the present form of the exercise of the ministry of primacy of the Bishop of Rome requires some adaptation according to the present day changes.

The Pope’s invitation has given a fresh expression of Vatican II’s reaffirmation of the Catholic Church’s irrevocable commitment to and progress in the way of ecumenism<sup>4</sup> as “an organic part of the Church’s life and work...not just some sort of appendix.”<sup>5</sup> Another very encouraging and welcoming aspect of the pope’s invitation is his emphasis on his “declared purpose to re-establish together full unity in legitimate diversity.”<sup>6</sup> This again is a reiteration of what he had said in

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1 *Ut Unum Sint* (*UUS*) No. 95.

2 *UUS* 88 referring to the Pope’s Discourse at the Headquarters of WCC Geneva (12 June 1984).

3 *UUS* 95 referring to Homily in the Vatican Basilica in the presence of Dimitrios I, Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch (December 6, 1987), 3; *AAS* 80 (1988) 714.

4 *UUS* No. 3.

5 *UUS* No. 20.

6 *UUS* No. 57.

June 1984 and 1986. In the former instance he said that the search for unity would in no way mean a search for uniformity. In the latter case he added that unity was not the absorption of one community by another but the full communion of the faith in the respect for the variety of diverse traditions to the extent that they express the same faith and incarnate the same Gospel in local cultures. Yet it is the perception of the present contributor from his 'a layman's' contact with a good number of ordinary members and priests of the Non-Catholic Churches in his limited circle that they are afraid that in practice the Vatican system is wholly absorptive to the nullification of other systems that enter into communion with it. It appears for them, although neither the Holy Father nor the Roman Curia mean, that practically Vatican considers its system as the ideal and necessary for all Churches for real and actual communion with the Church of Rome and the Successor of St. Peter.

### Salvation, Ecclesiality, Unity and Mission

*UUS* acknowledges that the communion of Saints consists of people "from all the Churches and ecclesial Communities which gave them entry into the communion of Salvation."<sup>7</sup> At the same time *UUS* (No. 10) repeats what Vatican II had stated in very clear terms that for Catholics the Church of Christ "subsists" in the Catholic Church governed by the Successor of St. Peter and the bishops in communion with him.<sup>8</sup> According to Acts 2, 47, the Church is the communion (Unity) created by the Lord of those who were being saved, that is to say, "a communion of

salvation." Against this picture, what is the ecclesial status of the "ecclesial Communities," of which Vatican II and *UUS* speak? It is not clear even in *UUS*. Clarity regarding essentials for salvation and ecclesiality, the relation between salvation and unity of the Church, and also the relation between unity of the Church and mission is essential to proceed in dialogue with all. Our Lord himself has given expression to the latter concern of unity of the Church (Jn 17,20-26). All Christians of any denominational subgroup cannot but be agreed upon it.

### At the Interest of the Malankara Church

The MCC perceives her special and unique role within the concern of the unity of Churches to **be a bridge** between the whole Malankara Church, the 'Orthodoxy' in Malankara in particular, and the Church of Rome and her bishop. The MCC, remaining faithful to what she prays (*lex orandi lex credendi*) according to the West Syrian Jerusalem-Antiochene liturgical tradition, believes that St. Peter had a special position within the brotherhood of the twelve apostles, and that it was interpreted by the early Churches and their venerable representatives as the 'first' among the brothers (apostles). The MCC accepts these truths as divinely revealed and carried on in the unimpaired tradition of the early Churches, as is witnessed in the New Testament, liturgical texts and early patristic interpretations to them.

The apostolic foundation of the Church is a matter of Christian faith (Mt 16,13-20; Eph 2,20). The 'first' among the brotherhood of the twelve apostles, upon whom Our Lord

7. *UUS* No. 84.

8. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, No. 14.



founded his Church, is a necessary part of it. Our Lord gave the one and the same apostleship, and the same mission and authority, to all the twelve. But within the apostolic brotherhood he gave the ministry of the ‘first’ to Peter. Both the communion of the apostles and the representative function of the ‘first’ among them were executed in the apostolic Church. None contradicted or opposed or objected to or separated from any. The same mission and authority given to the apostles was given to St. Peter before it was given to the apostolic brotherhood (Mt 16,18-20; Mt 18,18-20; 28,18-20). There are Gospel occasions when St. Peter responds Jesus without consulting the other apostles. We may understand such depictions as follows: what the Lord gave to the others was given first or specially to Peter. Peter responded on behalf of all; that is to say, Peter’s response was that of all. The first letter of Peter in the New Testament is a clear evidence of the fact that the early Churches accepted that Peter strengthened his brethren in faith – 1 Peter was sent by “Peter” (Bishop of Rome) to strengthen the neighbouring Churches put under test. “Peter” exercised his primacy. Primatial ministry of Peter was part of and within the apostolic communion. The former was neither above nor below the latter. Peter’s primatial ministry was the sign and revelation of the communion of the apostles which represents the unity of the Churches. The primatial ministry of Peter is better understandable if we consider jointly the execution of the communion of the apostles and that of the representative role of St. Peter. Then we are enabled to see Peter’s ministry of primacy in three interrelated aspects of unity, apostolicity and witness (Tillard).

Though the ‘apostle’ position of the twelve is irreplaceable and unsubstitutable, apostolicity and apostolic ministry is continued

in the Church, and that according to the divine will. Church has never failed to perceive it as the will and plan of her founder Lord that the ministry of the apostolic brotherhood shall be continued in the Church. The MCC perceives it as artificial to say that continuity of the ministry of the apostolic brotherhood in the Church does not include the ministry of the ‘first’ among the apostles. The very ‘reception’ by some theologians of the Malankara Orthodox Church (Catholicate group) that every bishop in his Church is in the position of St. Peter (following one view of Cyprian) implies ‘reception’ of the primacy of Peter. “Primacy” has been always associated with Apostle Peter among the twelve apostles. Primacy of a successor of the apostles is first and originally a relation within the brotherhood of the successors of the apostles. But then the question arises, “Can the ministry of the primacy of Peter in the apostolic brotherhood of the twelve be reduced only to the bishop in relation to his Church?” Corollaries to this question are, “Is the (one) local eucharistic Church, which is a full real Church, the whole Church?” And “If one local Church is not the whole Church, who, in the economy of Incarnation, that is to say, in the economy of visible signs, is the unifying factor of the Primate of the communion of local Churches?” According to the Trinitarian foundation of the Church, and its ecclesiological corollary, namely, the Church as communion of Churches, each local Church, in order to realize her essential fullness (catholicity), has to be in communion with the other individual local Churches, which necessarily involves communion with the Primate of the communion of Churches.

There appear two mutually contradicting tendencies among some (same) “Orthodox” theologians: One, deny the Primacy of St. Peter

in order to deny a Primate within the brotherhood of bishops of the whole Church. Two, simultaneously receive primacy of a bishop among bishops only on local, or regional or at the most national level, but not beyond these limits. This is evidently a contradiction with regard to the Church of Christ. Local Church and 'National Church' are not the same, according to sound ecclesiology. Local Church means the same Church of Christ, his fullness, realized and present in each place. The New Testament designations such as 'the Church of Jerusalem,' 'the Church of Judaea,' 'the Church of Samaria,' or 'the Church of Galilee' do not mean 'national' Churches. "National Church" is more a product of those political state authorities and "state churches", of the culture of "iron curtain" or their imitators, than that of the children of the Church of Christ. The same hermeneutic principle has to be followed to interpret the New Testament passages on the special position of St. Peter within the brotherhood of the twelve apostles and for other New Testament passages; and similarly in the interpretation of the exercise of Primacy in the Church and in the communion of Churches. It is necessary that we consider Primacy within the brotherhood of bishops on the basis of the Trinitarian foundation and apostolicity of the Church.

### **Primacy of the Church of Rome and Her Bishop**

In *UUS* the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II recalls Rome's exercise of the ministry of direction on mutual agreement in questions of faith and discipline in the first millennium (*UUS* No.95). What was the type of that exercise? If at all any Church and bishop enjoyed primacy of any sort recognized by other Churches from early times, it is the Roman Church and her bishop. Many other Churches besides that of Rome rose to leadership. But

Rome gained prominence over all others, especially in the Roman Empire. Several factors played their role in the rise of the Church of Rome to prominence. The three main ones are her apostolic beginning in Peter-Paul, her moral leadership and model, and her political importance. The primacy of the Church of Rome and her bishop was stabilized on her moral authority of being the model for all the others, namely, "the Church which presides in love" (St. Ignatius of Antioch). In the first millennium the other Churches recognized the Primacy of Rome and her bishop not as one of juridical primacy or authority over them. In the course of the development of the local Church structures, the bishop of Rome became the patriarch of the West. And within the communion of Patriarchs, the Patriarch of Rome was recognized as its head. But this did not mean recognition of the supremacy of the Roman Patriarch over the other Churches and their bishops in juridical terms.

In all local Churches the structure and exercise of leadership developed independently and in each one's way. During the Middle Ages the Church of Rome assumed the form of 'Mother Church' and intervened in the internal affairs of the Churches of the West. Gradually the Patriarch of Rome, as the Patriarch of the West, exercised power over the other Western Churches. The Crusades and later European colonial expansion accompanied by European missionary works paved the way for expanding his power over regions of the Eastern and Oriental Churches. As a result of Western missionary activity it became natural for the Patriarch of Rome to speak of his "Supreme" authority over the "Universal" Church. This type of one sided or unilateral growth was not a particular case of the Roman Catholic Church alone, it was the case of all the churches during the middle ages. All



of them developed their own particular ecclesiologies in accordance with their historical situations.

The Eastern and Oriental Churches did not and could not comprehend the papal powers developed unilaterally in the Middle Ages by the Western Church. In accordance with their one sided and isolated and subjugated state under Islam, the former could not comprehend terms such as "Universal Church" and "Supremacy," developed by the western Church in the Middle Ages. Only with the advent of Western missionaries did the Indian Church get familiarized with several Western terms developed during the middle ages in the West. Practically, the Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches (1990) reiterates the Roman See's insistence on and pressing upon the other Churches, particularly the Eastern and Oriental Churches, to accept Roman primacy in the way developed during the Middle Ages by the western Church and thereafter exercised. This spirit of the CCEO acts counter to the spirit of *UUS*, and the former will remain a hindrance on the way of regaining the canonical unity of the Churches with the Church of Rome. The Oriental and Eastern Churches of the first millennium did not have a juridical understanding of the Primacy of the Bishop of Rome. Definition and descriptions of the power and authority of the Pope in CCEO are understandable and ordinary to the Western Church and to some Eastern and Oriental Churches in full communion with Rome. But that is not the case with unwesternized Oriental and Eastern Churches. The present form of the definition and description of the power and authority of the Pope may remain unaltered as directly applicable to the Western Church spread all over the World. But to apply the same terms for the Eastern and Oriental Churches counts

equal to forcefully romanizing them. If the Church of Rome and her bishop sincerely desires the realization of the Pope's above said invitation, it is absolutely necessary that 'primacy' be defined and described in terms understandable and acceptable to the first millennium traditions of the Eastern and Oriental Churches. In this regard the MCC should render her service to help the bishop of Rome who must fulfill the ministry of the primacy of St. Peter within the communion of the bishops of Churches.

The Petrine ministry of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome shall be fulfilled in the communion of the Church as the sacrament of unity fulfilled by Christ. This implies that all Churches understand and accept the continuity of the apostolic brotherhood and Petrine ministry within it, giving priority to the unity of all Churches and of the whole humankind. Unless the Church of Christ, the sacrament of the universal unity fulfilled by Christ, reaches an agreement regarding the visible sign of her own unity, how can she carry on her ministry for the unity of the whole creation? Will not the primacy of the Bishop of Rome as a ministry for the unity of the Church remain defective and ineffectual in a system familiar only to the Roman Church and her bishop and centralizing authority to him by laws juridically binding but not bound by the law of love in which in the beginning of the first millennium the Church of Rome was accustomed to preside in? Because the Church is a communion of Churches, the primacy of the 'first' among the brotherhood of the bishops shall be accepted with suitable and proportionate power and authority. It is necessary that the Bishop of Rome fulfill his ministry of primacy as the visible sign and guarantee of the communion of the whole Church of Christ. ■

# CHRISTIANITY MISUNDERSTOOD

Jacob Kattackal

Christianity is often grossly misunderstood even by eminent Hindus. Some of the recent statements of Dr. Sudarshan, the R.S.S. leader, at the Nagpur conference are a proof that his concept of Christianity is a very defective one. He exhorts the Indian Christians to evolve a Christian Religion that is totally detached from Christianity abroad. It is strange to think that the Christian sense of universal brotherhood is anti-Indian when there is plea for the idea of universal brotherhood and global village at the secular level.

The usual Hindu concept of religion is much different from that of the Christians. For the average Hindu religion is only a personal affair, an individualistic concern. A Hindu may recite some prayers in private or visit a temple or shrine at his/her convenience, bow the head before a deity and offer some flowers. The Hindus do not have the obligation of a 'Sunday observance'. Hinduism does not have a commandment parallel to the Jewish-Christian Divine commandment: "Keep the Lords Day - Sunday - Holy". Every honest Christian - man or woman or child should assemble in the Church on Sundays-God's Days - for community prayer and sharing of the Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice, the Holy mass. Unlike some other religions, Christianity does not exclude any woman from communitarian Divine worship in the Church. For the Hindus, on the other hand, religious practices and beliefs are mostly a private, individualistic concern. This is clear from the Hindu connotation of the word 'matam', the meaning of this word is opinion, pleasing idea, derived from the Sanskrit root 'man - manyate', to think, to opine.

1. To reiterate, the Christian concept of God is very sublime: it is rooted in Divine Love and with basic social communitarian dimensions. No man is an island in Christianity. Besides a Christian has a set of Divinely revealed **Doctrines** (the creed) amid a perfect **Moral Code** based on Christ's teachings on the Ten commandments. In other words, the Christians have God-given creed to believe, and moral code to practise. He is not permitted to believe any erroneous doctrines or to perform any immoral act censured by Divine Revelation. The reason is obvious. If a person holds foolish beliefs he/she will commit stupid things. And the Christian Religion has divinely appointed leaders-the Priests, Bishops and Pope - to instruct them in the correct doctrines (Samyag darsana), and right action (Samyak karmanta). The whole Catholic world - over one hundred and twenty crores (Koti) all over the world recognises the Pope in Rome as the Vicar or Representative of Jesus Christ on earth appointed by the All merciful and omniscient God to guide the Catholic Christian world. The Catholics and other Christians are not submitting themselves to any foreign powers when they listen to the Pastoral Admonitions and Encyclicals of the Pope, or reliable spiritual guides abroad; nor are the Christians the less patriotic for that matter. Moreover, the doctrines and practices of Christianity promote genuine patriotism.

Realizing the excellence of listening to the moral teachings of the Pope who is the conscience of the world even the so-called 'patriotic church' of China has recently turned to the spiritual vice from the Vatican for guidance in moral issues such as abortion and



euthanasia. If the Hindus abroad can turn to India for spiritual guidance, what is wrong in Christians listening to the great spiritual masters outside India? In fact some of the great interreligious conferences organised in the East and West (eg. in Rome, New York) show that the international community is mature enough to joyfully share in the inheritance and insight of the Major Religions of the world. Just think of the many of the Westerners, who come to India to learn and appreciate the wisdom of India. Likewise there are numerous Hindus and other Non-Christians who relish reading the Holy Bible and love Jesus Christ, and they are consequently blessed by Him.

2. There is an erroneous view in India, being circulated consciously or unconsciously about the Christians, namely, 'the Christians are a people who came into India from some where outside India'. This is a gross error. What is the truth about the Christians of India? The naked truth is that the Indian Christians are the Children of the soil; none of them is an alien. Besides, the Christian religion can never be called a foreign religion since Christianity has been in existence in our mother country for over two thousand years. St Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ reached India already in 52 A.D. carrying the Divine message of Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world. Many of the south Indian Christians are the descendants of the first Christians who were baptized by St. Thomas himself as early as 52 A.D. So, the plain truth is that Christianity is older than the R.S.S. Religion which was shaped in this country much later than the time of St. Thomas in India.

3. Another widely circulated erroneous theory is that 'the Aryans are an indigenous people, and that their religion is really Indian. But what is the reality? What is the truth? The Aryans were aliens who entered into India

around the sixteenth century B.C. from the other side of the Hindu - Kush mountains. The alien religion they brought into our country got mixed with the Non-Aryan (Anaryan) religions of the aboriginals of India, and the present day Hinduism, an amalgam was formed centuries after the time of Jesus Christ. In other words the present day Hinduism definitely post-dates Christianity in India.

Of course, there are some Indians who want to deny the undeniable truth of the Aryan invasion of India. Fair minded scholars of East and West are at one in affirming the Aryan intrusion that took place around the 16th century B.C. These people calling themselves Aryans (nobles) entered the vast Indus - Ganga Plains and established their settlements there and called them the '*Aryavartta*' i.e. the *Aryan's settlements*. These intruding Aryans partly destroyed the Pre Aryans - settlers of the Indo Gangetic plains and partly scattered them into other parts of India, chiefly to the South. These new settlers, the Aryan community, brought with them a definitely polytheistic religion consisting in the worship of the various phenomena of Nature such as *Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Dawn, Night, Lightning* etc. The polytheistic Aryans confronting the Non-Aryan and Pre-Aryan populace (whom the Aryans contemptuously called *Dasyus* or *Servants* plummy nosed etc) were influenced by the Non-Aryan Pre-Aryan religions which were partly monotheistic and partly animistic; and thus gradually there evolved, in the early centuries of Christianity-ca 4th century A.D. the present day Hinduism which is a blend of Aryan and Pre-Aryan Non -Aryan beliefs and practices and worship. That is why the present day Hinduism is so multifaceted and amorphous.

The Aryan intrusion is so undeniable, and yet some people are bent on denying the

undeniable. The researches and excavations at Indus Valley sites in *Harappa Mohan - jo - daro*, the linguistic studies at the Dravidian International Institute, Trivandrum and elsewhere, the researches in comparative religion, mythology, philology, philosophy, sociology and the different strands of the Hindu religious philosophies, all these point to the Aryan, Non-Aryan elements of India and Hinduism.

Another interesting fact is the recent discovery of Aryan Gods such as *Nasaditya* on tablets in Central Asia which were inscribed over four thousand years ago. This proves that the Aryans migrated into India; not that the Aryans emigrated from India. Another proof is that we don't have a shred of evidence to the existence of Sanskrit, oral or written in India which pre-dates the Aryan invasion of 1600 B.C In other words Sanskrit language, the Aryan religion out of which has evolved the present day Hinduism-are all, really speaking, foreign in origin; and their promoters too.

The present day Arya - Dravida Distinction and the *Varna - Jati* differences are clear indicators to the foreign origin of the Aryans and the Aryan religions. Originally, the Aryans did not allow the Non - Aryans to share the Holy scripture, the Vedas. Even Sri Sankara in the 8th century A.D approvingly comments on a *Brahma - sutra of Badarayana* (4th century, A.D) that strictly forbids the sudras or low caste people to hear the Vedas or study the Vedas. This well known *Badarayana Sutra*, known as the *Apa - sudradhikarana* (Sudras keep away) prescribes the horrible punishment of pouring molten lead into the ears, and cutting off of the tongue of any Sudra who hears the vedas or recites the Vedas. Similarly, it was forbidden for all low caste people even to step into the campus of a temple. While the

fair skinned Aryan emigrants called themselves 'Aryans and Savarnas', the poor subjugated non Aryans were branded 'dark coloured or black (*anaryan, avarna*) and servants (*dasyus*) Thus the religion of the Aryans was forbidden to the native, indigenous people, the Non - Aryans.

4. Besides, the Indian Christians are more patriotic than the average other Indians. What enormous contributions have they given in the areas of Education, culture, Science and Military! Just think of the great number of Christian educationists, social workers and Military men. Think of Albert Ekka (who was an *Adivasi* Christian from Ranchi) who was awarded '*Vira Chakra*' after his death for his fidelity and military prowess. Indian Christianity has accepted and enhanced the genuine values of Indian culture and civilization. Who founded the prestigious Benares (Kasi) university ? Not an R.S.S advocate, not any Hindu. It was founded by Mrs. Annie Bessant, a Christian woman of English origin. Who collected laboriously and published meticulously the Sacred Books of India which form materials for perusal and research for millions of scholars all over the world? Surely it was not a Hindu; it was done by a German Christian, Maxmuller who was renowned as the greatest Sanskritist of the 19th century.

We must remember with gratitude also the great contributions by Indian Christian scholars for Sanskrit and Indian thought and culture. Think of the classical *Sanskrit mahakavyam* (*Kristu Bhagavatam*) by Prof. P.C. Devasia, the Hindu '*Rama katha*' of Prof. Bulke; the malayalam Dictionary by Dr. Bailly the Sanskrit grammar of Fr Antoine and so on.

5. Even in Seminaries and other Christian religious institutions a considerable part of the syllabus is for Indian Religious philosophies,



Sanskrit, our Indian heritage and Patrimony as Indian Christians. Just consider the *Kathopanishad*, *Isopanishad*, *Vedas*, *Upanisads* the six Darsanas, the Bhagavad - Gita etc, which I have been teaching hundreds of seminarians (Christian priest students ) year after year in many Major seminaries in India

I once put this proposal to my dear old friend, *Sri P. Paramesvaran*, the Director of Bharatiya Vicarakendram at Trivandrum.

**Mr. Paramesuaran**, you see hundreds of Christian students study the Hindu sruties and smrties. Why don't you arrange for teaching the Bible and Christian literature to the Hindu students? We shall gladly arrange courses for them.

To this my proposal *Sri P. Paramesvras's* reply was this: 'the Hindu students in truth study the Bible'. But, I seriously doubt, how many Hindu students, young men and women, really learn the Bible? True, my dear friend *Sri Paramesuaran* is well versed in Bible; he is a genuine devotee of Jesus Christ. He is not unfamiliar with the unforgettable admonition of Mahatma Gandhiji who said: My advice to the Hindus is this: Unless you learn and put into practice the Teachings of Jesus Christ, your life will be imperfect"

6. In truth , the Christians of our country are ever loyal to the rich heritage of India. The celebrated admonition of the Second Vatican council is that the Christians "should preserve and propagate the religious, moral and social values of the other Religions" (Decree on Non - Christian Religions, 3). And the present Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, in his recent encyclical 'Faith and Reason' (1999), in para 72 urge the Indian Christians to appropriate and assimilate the great spiritual heritage of India, and to give expression to it

in the light of Christian thought, and enrich Christianity. And it is a well known truth that the philosophy, culture, religious worship and even thought patterns etc of Indian Christians are all permeated by their Indian heritage. To convince himself of the truth of this statement, I invite Mr Sudarsan, my R.S.S. friend to attend the Religious services of Catholics, especially of the Syrian Catholics of Kerala.

In Short Christianity in India is not at all a foreign religion. Since it has stuck roots here in the Indian soil over two thousand years, long before the modern Hinduism was fashioned, Christianity is by every right an INDIAN RELIGION. Along with Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, Christianity is an Indian Religion; and Christians in this country are hundred precent Indians with the inviolable right for professing, practising and propagating this Indian religion, namely Christianity.

And it is a delightful truth that the Hindus in general have such love for and faith in Jesus Christ, the World Redeemer. Consider Ramakrishna Paramahansa's Christ experience and his declaration: "Jesus Christ is the *Maha Yogi*" I think, no R.S.S. person can ever forget or ignore the profession of Swami Vivekananda:

"If I were there in the presence of Jesus Christ (when the sinner woman washed Jesus, feet with her tears), I would have washed His feet, not with my tears, but with my blood" (Luke, 7,38). Remember, the devout Hindu who puts his/her faith in Jesus Christ, receive more Divine Blessings from Jesus Christ than the Christians do. May the Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God, bless all the people of Mother India.



## BOOK REVIEW

George Kaniarakath CMI, *PERSON AND FAITH OF THE APOSTLE THOMAS IN THE GOSPELS*, New Delhi: 1998, Page XIII +200, Price 250.

The author of this book Rev Dr George Kaniarakath is a scholar in Biblical theology. He was awarded Licentiate in Sacred Scripture by the Biblical Institute, Rome and had his special studies for one year at the Biblical and Archeological School at Jerusalem. He received D.Th. from the Pontifical Urban University, Rome in 1995. The present work is the modified form of his doctoral dissertation.

St Thomas the Apostle, who is our Father in faith is characterized often in history as an obstinate and sceptical disciple. He is called 'the doubter' and 'the incredulous'. He is misunderstood and misrepresented in Patristic studies, Biblical commentaries and Christian art. The author in this book tries to understand the person and faith of St Thomas as presented in the four Gospels. He presents St Thomas as the one who preferred to die with Jesus rather than to live without him.

The book is divided into five chapters. The first chapter makes a brief survey of the studies made so far on the subject. The following chapters demonstrate the position of St Thomas among the Twelve disciples. The second chapter focuses on him in the context of the faith-expressions of the Twelve during the public ministry of Jesus according to the Synoptics. The third chapter examines their faith-expressions during the public ministry of Jesus on the basis of the Johannine Account.

St Thomas is often remembered because of his active and special role at the post resurrection appearances of Jesus to his disciples. The fourth chapter studies these appearances and the responses of the disciples as reported in the Synoptics. The fifth chapter which examines the post resurrection appearances of Jesus in St John presents St Thomas as a practical man of firm conviction and decisions.

This book is a rich contribution to the study of the faith not only of St Thomas but also of the whole college of the Apostles. The bibliography given at the end of the book is of great help to make further study on the subject.

**Thomas Mannooramparampil**

Geevarghese Chediath, *JERUSALEMILE CYRIL, MATHADHYAPANA PRASANGANGAL*, (Malayalam translation of the Catechetical Homilies of St Cyril of Jerusalem), Kottayam, and 2000, p. 370, Price, Rs.90 (OIRSI Publication 238): It is for the first time that these Homilies are being translated into any Indian language. Already in 1986 the same author translated into Malayalam the *Catechetical Homilies of Theodore of Mopsuestia*.

Idem, *MADHYAKALA SABHACHARITRAM*, (History of the Church during the Middle Ages), Kottayam, 2000, p. 240, Rs.65 (OIRSI Publ.241): Its first part deals with the history of the Western Church, second part deals with the Eastern Churches and their encounter with Islam, and the third part deals with the Crusades and its impact in the life of the Churches.



## NEWS

### **H.B. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, accorded cordial Welcome in Kerala**

H.B. Bartholomew I, the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Byzantine Church was given a very cordial welcome in Kerala by the Orthodox Church and the state government of Kerala. He is the 271st Ecumenical Patriarch and the first one to visit Malankara Orthodox Church.

### **H.B. Karekin II Welcomed by the Holy Father in Vatican**

H.B. Karekin II, the supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of all Armenians was given a warm welcome by H.H. Pope John Paul II in Vatican on November 9, 2000. The Patriarch was accompanied by the minister for Religious Affairs of Armenia and entourage of Bishops from Armenia and other nations.

The Holy Father in his address referred to the deep faith of the Armenian Church and the persecutions it suffered to preserve its religious heritage. The Pope expressed his sentiments on the 1700th anniversary of the Baptism of Armenia. The history of Armenian people is mingled with grandeur and persecution, joy and sorrow. The Patriarch in his reply expressed gratitude for the cordial relation existing between the two churches and renewed his invitation to the Pope to participate in the celebration of the 1700th anniversary of the baptism of Armenia.

On the same day both the Holy Father and the Patriarch Karekin II signed a joint Communiqué.

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Idem. *QURBANYUDE VYAKHYANANGAL*, (Four West Syrian Eucharistic Commentaries), Kottayam, 2000, P. 200, Rs.60 (OIRSI Publ.246): The Eucharistic Commentaries of Dionysius, the Areopagite, George Bishop of the Arab Tribes, Moses bar kepha, and Dionysius bar Salibi are given here with notes and comparison, in Malayalam translation.

Idem, *SBHAPITHAKANMAR-III*, Kottayam. 2000, p.220, Rs.60: (OIRSI Publ. 244). The Malayalam translation of 10 very important patristic texts, such as *Melito, Peri Pascha, Cyprian, On the Unity of the Catholic Church, The Odes of Solomon, Hippolytus, Apostolic Tradition*, etc. are given here.

Idem, *MAR BABAI, CHRISTUSASTRAM*, (Mar Babai, Liber de Unione): the Malayalam translation of the Book of Union of Mar Babai the Great (+628), Kottayam, 2000 (Nuhro 4), p.250: This is the First time that the *Liber de Unione* of Mar Babai is being published in a modern language. Corbishop Michael Birnie prepared an English translation, but it is not yet published. Since Prof. Chediath made his study on the *Christology of Mar Babai*, it was easy for him to make this translation. It was a felt need to know directly the "Nestorian Christology" and this translation will be an ecumenical contribution.

OIRSI Publication, P.B.No 10. Vadavathoor, Kottayam, 686010, publishes the first four books, while the last one is published by Seeri, Baker Hills, Kottayam, 686001.

**Thomas Mannooramparampil**




### **New Prefect for the Congregation for the Oriental Churches**

His Beatitude, moran mor Ignace Moussa I Daoud, the Patriarch of the Catholic Antiocheans (West Syrians), has been appointed as the prefect for the Congregation for the Oriental Churches by Pope John Paul II. He succeeds His Eminence Achille Cardinal Sylvestrini.

The New prefect was born on 18 September 1930 and was ordained priest on 17 October 1954. He continued his studies in Canon Law at the Pontifical Lateran University. He was elected bishop of Cairo in 1977. The Patriarchal Synod promoted him to the Archdiocese of Home-Homa in 1994. On 13 October 1998 he was elected as the Patriarch, on 20 October of the same year he obtained the "ecclesiastical communion", and on 25 October he was consecrated and enthroned as the Patriarch. He was also consultor to the Pontifical Commission for the revision of the Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches and is a member of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith.

### **Great Jubilee Celebrations of the Malankara Catholic Church in Rome**

The Malankara Catholic Church had its Jubilee Celebrations in Rome on 19-21 November. The Archbishop-Metropolitan Most Rev. Cyril Mar Baselios together with the other bishops of the Malankara Church participated in the functions in Rome. On the 20th there was the Papal audience, in which His Holiness spoke about the blessings which God in His abundant mercy showered upon the Malankara Catholic Church, with its full communion with the See of St Peter in Rome. On the 21st there was the Eucharistic celebration together with the Syrian Catholic Church of Antioch, whose patriarch, His Beatitude, Moran Mor Ignatius Moussa I presided. There were participants, both laity and clergy, in the Eucharistic celebration from both the Churches from all over the world. It was a fitting thanksgiving service and expression of the communion between the Roman Catholic Church and the Malankara Catholic Church. The Malankara Church was in communion with the other churches including the Roman Church till 1599, and upto 1653 it was under the direct jurisdiction and rule of the Bishop of Rome. A section of the Malankara Church lost the full communion with Rome from 1653-1930. In 1930 the lost full communion was restored and therefore the movement is called the *Reunion Movement*. In December 27-28 the Malankara Catholic Church is celebrating the 70th anniversary (*Sapthathi*) of its full communion with Rome at Tiruvalla. The most important thrust of the celebration is the highlighting of the mission of the Malankara Catholic Church namely its mission as a *bridge church-bridge* between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church and to witness to the Lord in an authentic united manner. *As a united bridge church* Malankara Catholic Church always stood for dialogue, concord, peace and united action. It had from the very beginning the basic mission orientation, namely proclaiming the Gospel to all. The *Sapthathi* celebration is an occasion to thank God and reexamine our mission in the New Millennium, in the light of the new developments after the second Vatican Council and the exigencies of the Modern World.





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